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MYSTERY MAGAZINE

DETECTIVE STORIES

DECEMBER 15, 1922 VOL. V No. 122

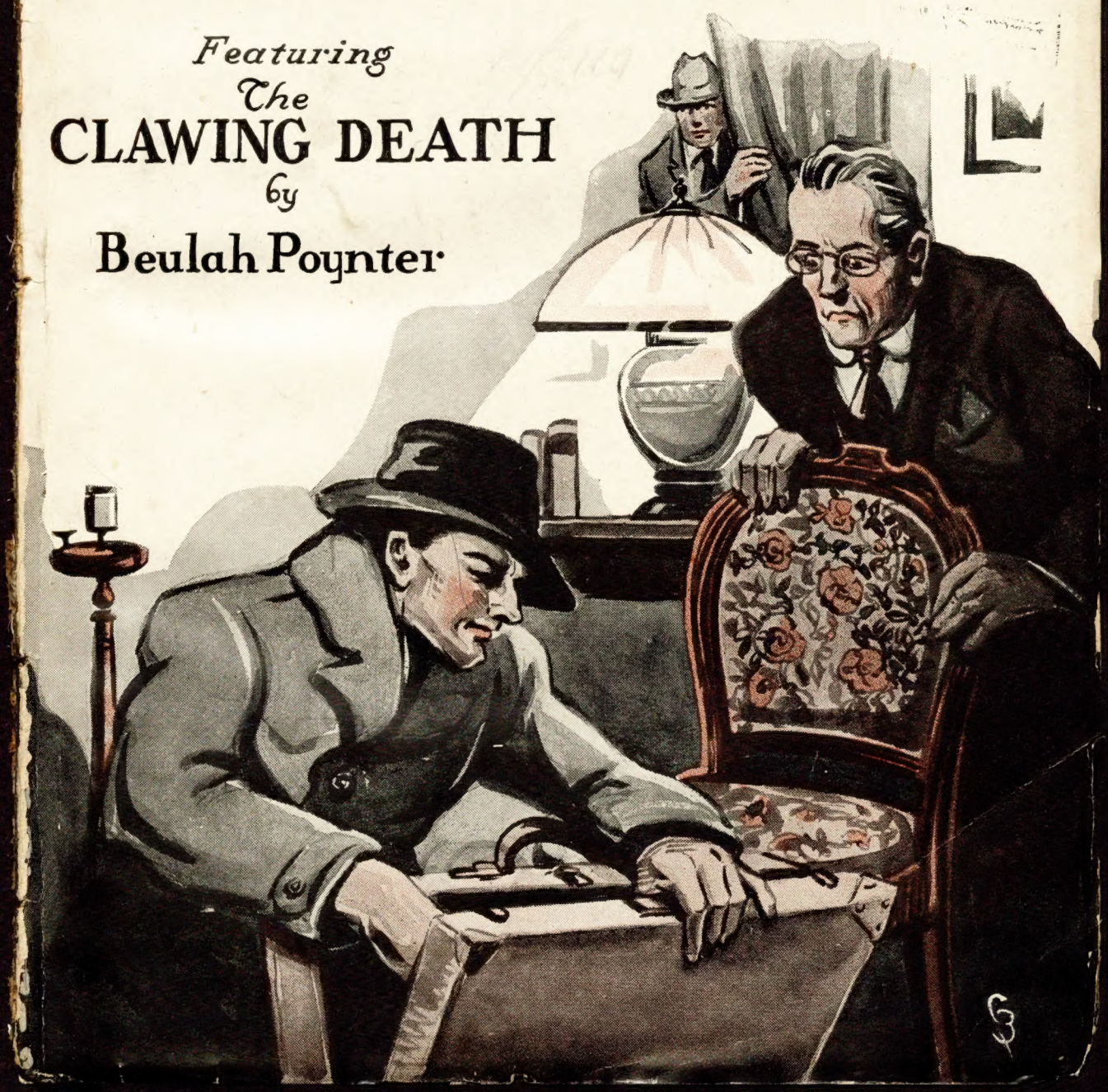
Featuring

The

CLAWING DEATH

by

Beulah Poynter



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. V DECEMBER 15, 1922 No. 122

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY

THE CLAWING DEATH. By Beulah Poynter 3

SERIAL STORY

TRACKED BY INCHES—PART II. By Edward Lee Bennett 29

SHORT STORIES

THE FLYING AUTO. By W. W. Hatfield 23
DETECTIVE MOONEY, STRATEGIST. By Joe Burke 35
TWIN GUARDS. By Harry Freeman Thompson 41
GREATER THAN HATE. By Jack Gottlieb 49

MISCELLANEOUS MATTER

CONVICTS SAW CELL BARS 28
A GIRL SLEUTH 34
THE "ANGEL-FACED BOY" IS ARRESTED 40
LEGLESS "BEGGAR" OWNS LUXURY CAR 57
PINKERTON'S TROOPS 58

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A Confidential Chat

THE Cash Prize Contest is on in full swing now, and we are pleased to see by the letters we receive that it has aroused a surprising amount of interest among our readers. The reason is that our contests are absolutely fair and square, and we pay genuine money to legitimate winners. In order to get as many coupons as possible the contestants are resorting to various methods. Some are buying extra copies, others ask their friends to subscribe and get coupons from them, and still more are actually ordering back numbers to get them. Everybody interested is certainly displaying an unusual amount of energy in their efforts to win the prizes. Why don't YOU try it? It's like finding money in the street to get these prizes.

In the next number we are going to hand you a rare treat with a feature novelette entitled "A Master of Millions." It was written by your old favorite Charles Fulton Oursler, an author who does not know how to write a bad story. There is a fascinating element of mystery in this novelette that cannot fail to please you.

Among the short stories there will be one of the finest we have ever published, called "The Best Man," by T. F. T. West. The ending of this story is totally unexpected. Miss Beulah Poynter contributes a little gem entitled "The Coward." There are few characters, but it is powerful in construction and interesting from beginning to end. You must not miss reading Edgar Daniel Kramer's detective sketch "Too Many Bones." It shows how an astute sleuth captured his man by a clever trick after years of watchful waiting. There will be more stories equally as good and a number of special articles. "Women Detectives" is the title of one of them. It contains an interesting account of the lives and exploits of some of the most famous female sleuths the world ever saw.

In addition to all the good things mentioned we expect to have quite a number of intensely interesting short items that will please you.

THE EDITOR.

THE CLAWING DEATH

by Beulah Poynter

CHAPTER ONE

"EXTRA! All about the great mystery!"

A tall hatchet-faced man in topcoat and fur cap stopped abruptly to purchase a paper from a newsboy who stood on a corner of Thirty-fourth street striving to keep the wind and driving snow out of his eyes. A home-going throng of workers, belated shoppers and amusement seekers swarmed toward the subway.

The man, who had a pallid, unhealthy color, gave the lad some pennies, motioned a taxi driver, whose machine was vacant, and climbed into the car. Then he opened the paper, and with narrowed eyes, shaded by horn-rimmed spectacles, scanned the lurid headlines on the front page.

"MYSTERIOUS ASSASSIN CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM!"

Farther on there was a description of the crime. The man had been killed some time after midnight by being, as nearly as the authorities could determine, clawed to death, as though by some animal. There was a peculiar feature to the case. No indications of a struggle were seen in the room where the man had been killed.

The man read the article through with avid interest, folded up the paper, and thrust it in his coat pocket. Then with a fountain-pen he jotted down in a notebook the address of the victim, Emanuel Clemmons, No. — Fifth avenue.

The taxi drove downtown and into Washington Square, where it stopped before one of the old-fashioned red-brick houses, and the man alighted. The street lights had already begun to flicker through the falling snow.

The man paid the driver, pulled a key from an inside pocket, and inserting it in the lock admitted himself into the house. There were no electric lights in the long hallway, and he paused a moment to light a gas chandelier which hung, like a Japanese lantern, just over his head before he ascended the winding stairs. A fragrant odor of food greeted his nostrils, and a burst of girlish laughter came from a half-open door farther down the hall.

"Natalie!" he called.

"That you, uncle?" cried a feminine voice; then the half-closed door was flung open and a whirlwind of rustling skirts

rushed to meet him billowing about a curly-haired, rosy-faced girl of nineteen. Roguish black eyes, full of dancing imps, gleamed from under a mop of black hair, red lips parted over strong white teeth as a pair of round brown arms were flung about his shoulders.

"You're home early, aren't you, dear?" she asked as she assisted him out of his greatcoat. She made a little *moué* as her fingers touched the dampness of the cloth.

"I'm quite early," he replied quietly. The man had a deep, hollow voice, which once heard was never forgotten. He was tall, lean, muscular and virile. His iron-gray hair was cropped short and his slate-gray eyes were deep-sunken but glowed with a keen mentality. "Supper ready?" he asked, accepting the girl's caress in a perfunctory way, though he laid his hand on her clustering curls affectionately.

"You just bet it is. Mandy Sue has outdone herself to-night. She cooked as good a meal as you ever got in Kentucky."

The man seemed to wince as she mentioned his native State, but he smiled at her enthusiasm.

"I'm hungry," he muttered. "I've had a hard day."

Morgan Grimstead and his niece lived together with the old black servant, Mandy Sue. The house was ancient, and had been allowed to deteriorate for lack of sufficient money to keep it in good condition. Mr. Grimstead was an inventor, and the whole upper floor was devoted to his work. He had removed most of the partitions and made one large room of it. During the day Grimstead was employed as chemist in a pharmacy, of which he was part owner, but he spent many hours at home tinkering on pieces of machinery. He was a kindly man, unassuming, tender in his attitude toward his little niece, and very near-sighted.

As they sat down to a delicious little dinner that Mandy Sue prepared, the great fireplace with its blazing log throwing a rosy glow of cheerfulness over the whole room, Natalie reached for the evening paper, and pouted playfully when he refused to give it to her.

"No, my dear," he said quietly, "you want to read about those recent murders, and I think the subject is too repulsive for a young girl. There are plenty of wholesome, worth-while things to think about without filling your mind with lurid tales of gruesome tragedies."

"Has there been another crime committer, uncle?" she asked.

"Yes. A very mysterious affair, too."

"And do the police know who did it?"

"They are not telling."

"What do you think about it?"

"I, Natalie? Why, I haven't given it any thought." He hesitated, and a deep scowl appeared on his forehead. "The crime in to-night's paper," he added, "was very near home, on lower Fifth avenue. Emanuel Clemmons was found dead in his library."

"Please let me read about it!" cried the girl, and her uncle relinquished the paper to her with evident reluctance, and she read the article.

"Did you know him?" she finally asked.

"I've met him. He has been in the drug-store once or twice. I think I shall go over to his home."

"To his home!" The girl stared at the old man incredulously. "Why should you go there?"

"Perhaps I'm prompted by the same morbid curiosity you have."

"I wonder why it is," she said slowly, picking at a bit of chicken on her plate, "that I am just terribly interested in all kinds of deeds of violence? I always long to know how they are committed, why, and the manner in which their perpetrators are brought to justice. Is there anything abnormal about that, uncle?"

"I shouldn't say there was," he mused, "though, to an extent, I suppose we all have a strain of something in us, some little twist which, with a turn of a hair's breadth one way or another, would tend toward abnormality. The development of one brain cell, one set of muscles, or one nerve force, to the detriment of other parts of our mechanism, is apt to throw the piece of machinery we call the human mind out of kilter."

Natalie sighed; only too well she knew how the eccentric old inventor was regarded

by the neighborhood. "Off," they called him in slang terms; "batty—a nut," and a little more than erratic.

After the evening meal was over Grimstead rose and again donned his greatcoat.

"I'll be back in a little while, my dear," he said in the doorway, "but don't wait up for me."

CHAPTER TWO

THE murdered man had been discovered early in the day. Both morning and evening papers had an account of the tragedy, and the morbidly curious throng which had been attracted still hung about the stoop which led to the great iron-barred door with its bronze knocker.

It was quite as old and unpretentious-looking as its neighbors, but its deceased owner, Emanuel Clemmons, had been an extremely wealthy man, and though it was lacking in ornamentations and richness on the exterior, there was no dearth of luxury inside.

Grimstead's quiet dignity and almost patrician air gave him entrée to the house. He was not unknown to the police, for, though he had never admitted it to his little niece, he was curiously interested in criminology. When the study of a crime did not interfere with his work in the upper story of his home he always managed to visit the scene where it had taken place.

As a red-eyed, buxom woman, who had been Mr. Clemmons's housekeeper, admitted him, a clear-eyed young man with laughing lines about a broad, good-natured mouth greeted him casually. At Grimstead's evident surprise when he called him by name, he explained that he was Tom Steele, a detective sent by Inspector Donovan to look into the case.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Steele," Grimstead said quietly; "I'm very glad to know you, but I supposed there had been an examination this morning and the body had been turned over to the undertaker."

"You're right," replied Steele. "We've got a couple of plain-clothesmen upstairs now keeping guard. Mr. Clemmons will be buried to-morrow afternoon."

"Strange case, isn't it?" said the inventor. "I only just read the account in the paper, but I'm very much interested. Is it true that there were no fingerprints, no indications of a struggle, no clues whatever?"

"Quite true. This thing gets my goat." Tom Steele laughed grimly. "We're no nearer getting at the bottom of the mystery than we were before."

"As I understand it, there was no robbery committed, so the crime didn't take place for that reason."

"Not a thing gone," replied Tom; "not a paper touched, no safe opened, nothing disturbed, just the body found literally clawed to pieces."

"Very strange, very strange," murmured the old man; "it hardly seems possible that a wild animal, such as everything would indicate, could wander at large and destroy this man!"

"It's an impossibility," exclaimed the detective. "An animal couldn't reach this library. How could an animal gain access to this home without being seen? There's a human being behind it, but one would almost fancy he has supernatural power the way he covers his tracks. If we can find a motive for the deed we may find a clue. So far we can find no motive."

"Revenge?" said the inventor softly.

"From all accounts," replied the other, "this man was well liked and had no apparent enemies. He was a retired merchant, quiet, peaceful, doing good in a way, and certainly no harm. No, the psychology of things points to an abnormal being, a 'Jack the Ripper,' or some one of his ilk."

"May I see the body?" Grimstead asked.

"I suppose so. I came back to nose around myself, but I'm pretty well disgusted. If I had a single tangible thing to lay my hands on I wouldn't give up. But this crime is baffling!"

Grimstead smiled at the detective's scowling face. They entered the library, which was at the top of the stairs, and though the inventor drew a quick breath as he saw the coffin on two chairs in the middle of the

room, he stepped boldly over the threshold and toward it.

"The place is just as we found it," said Tom. He nodded greeting to two young men who sat by the window playing cards, their backs to the grim figure in the centre of the room. "We just lifted the body from the floor where we found it in front of that chair. Evidently he was attacked from the front, and in his death-throes slipped from the chair and fell face upward before it."

Grimstead lifted the cloth off the dead man's face and stared at the curiously mangled neck.

"No human agency did this," he said; "a man's hands could not do it." He seemed to choke over the words.

"Do you believe in the supernatural, Mr. Grimstead?" Tom asked suddenly.

"Why not? Don't you?"

"I don't know. The servants here are beginning to think some demoniac force destroyed this man."

"They may be right," said the inventor slowly, his near-sighted, slate-colored eyes closing meditatively; "they may be right. Some new and unknown force may have been invented that did this deed."

"Great God! Mr. Grimstead!" exclaimed the young detective, "that would be too awful for belief! We could not protect any one against a newly invented force of which we are ignorant."

"No, you couldn't."

"We'd be in danger ourselves by continuing our investigations."

"That's true. You may be in danger. I may be also." The old man's hollow voice quivered slightly, as though he felt an inward shudder; then he continued in a quiet, self-contained manner: "It's rather foolish to harrow ourselves with such thoughts, don't you think, Mr. Steele? I'd like to look over the house, if you don't mind, and possibly ask the servants a few questions. You see, I *am* interested, but purely from the psychological standpoint."

"I doubt if you'll get much information from the servants. They are packing to leave the house, and seem to fear a sinister, supernatural presence has something to do with the crime, as I told you."

"I can try," Grimstead answered.

CHAPTER THREE

THE first person with whom they came into contact was Mrs. Overman, the red-eyed housekeeper who had admitted Grimstead into the house. She glared at Grimstead suspiciously as the detective introduced him, and when he requested her to tell all she knew concerning the happenings of the night before she declared she had told everything to the police and didn't see why she should talk about something she wanted to forget.

"I don't think you've told quite everything you know," said the inventor in such a peculiar tone that the headquarters man looked at him in amazement. The woman's ruddy face became gray, and she stared big-eyed and gray-lipped at the old criminologist.

"Why—what d'ye mean?" she gasped.

"Did you tell them about the man you admitted into this house last night?" asked Grimstead quietly.

"Man—I—I admitted last night!" she repeated after him.

"Yes, the man who rang the bell at twelve o'clock, whom you ushered into the hall, and to whom you pointed out Mr. Clemmons's library?"

The detective stared in amazement, while Grimstead continued: "The small hunchbacked man with the black suitcase."

The housekeeper suddenly uttered a wail. "He wasn't a man! He was a spirit; a evil, horrible devil!" She buried her face in her hands with a shuddering sigh and dropped into a mahogany bench near by.

"I don't understand your allusion, Mr. Grimstead," said Steele.

"I happened to be passing this way," the inventor replied, "and noticed a rather unusual figure go up the stairs leading to this house. It was so late for a caller I paused and watched him. He was a small hunchbacked man and, judging by his carriage,

very old; he carried a huge black suitcase. I watched him as he rang the bell, and then saw Mrs. Overman very clearly as she stood in the lighted hallway when she opened the door to him."

"This knowledge may prove invaluable," said the officer. "I thank you very much, Mr. Grimstead. Why did you keep still about it, Mrs. Overman?"

"He wasn't a man," she repeated; "he was a fiend!"

"Why do you say that?"

"I don't know; mebbe from his eyes, mebbe from his voice, but he wasn't human! He wasn't!"

"In what way did his voice and eyes differ from other men's?" inquired Grimstead eagerly.

"I can't explain it. His voice sounded dead and far away, just as if it didn't come from him, but from behind him, and he didn't seem to hear it, and his eyes were fishy and filmy and unseeing. Oh, my Gawd! Just like a dead person's!"

Steele looked at the inventor, his nostrils dilating as he strove to read what the enigmatical old man was thinking. Grimstead laid a long white hand on the woman's arm and, leaning close to her, peered into her face.

"Why did you withhold this knowledge from the police? Why did you say you admitted no one to Mr. Clemmons's study?"

Again the woman shivered. "I was afraid to speak of it," she whispered.

"Afraid?"

"Afraid of that thing that looked like a man. Why, his face was green and livid, and he—he said I wasn't to say he'd been here or he'd cause me trouble."

"Well, I'll be damned!" ejaculated the detective. "Did you let the hunchback out yourself?" he asked.

"No, sir. I saw him go into the master's library, and then later I heard the door slam and I knew he'd left."

"How much later?"

"About fifteen minutes."

"And you heard no noise of any kind, no outcries?" asked the detective.

"No, sir. Everything was perfectly silent. I think Mr. Clemmons had been expecting him."

"And you didn't go near the library last night after this visitor had left?"

"No."

Grimstead turned to the young man. "Who discovered the body? The papers said his valet; is it true?"

"Yes. He went into the library at nine o'clock this morning and found Mr. Clemmons lying as I told you. The medical examiner said death had come at a little after twelve."

"It was twelve o'clock when I saw the hunchback enter the house," said Grimstead. "Find him and you'll have your mysterious assassin!"

"Great Lord, man, no man was capable of committing a crime in the manner Clemmons was killed and leave absolutely no trace, either of footprints, fingermarks, or a clue of any kind!"

"He has left a trace," said Grimstead quietly. "I saw him enter, so did Mrs. Overman here. She can describe his appearance in detail. I'll warrant we aren't the only ones in this city who have seen this man."

To humor the old gentleman Steele introduced all the servants, who were making their preparations to leave the house, and allowed him to question them, but absolutely no information was to be gleaned. The valet had gone to Mr. Clemmons's room in the morning as usual and had discovered the bed unused and his master absent; so, descending to the library, he had thus discovered the body lying as the detective had explained. Then he had immediately sent for the police.

It was almost one o'clock when the old man inserted his latch-key on Washington Square and entered silently so as not to disturb his sleeping niece.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE next morning the papers gave out the news that another mysterious murder had been committed in the same

manner as the previous one. This time it was Ezekiel Middleton, an elderly widower, who was the victim.

When the word reached Inspector Donovan of another mysterious crime he swore lustily, and taking his feet from the desk on which they were resting brought them to the floor with a bang and asked that young Steele be sent to him.

"Say, Steele!" he exclaimed by way of greeting, as he chewed viciously upon a huge black cigar which was habitually in his mouth, "this damned nonsense has got to stop. Some one is making a laughing-stock of the whole police department. We can't afford that. Two murders in one week committed by the same person is so serious it's appalling."

"I know that, chief," said Tom gravely, "and except for what the housekeeper at the Clemmons place said and old Grimstead's statement regarding this weird hunchback, we haven't a tangible thing on which to place our hands."

"Great Lord, man, you don't call that hunchback tangible, do you? Two people say they've seen him! But aren't we honeycombing this town for a person answering his description, and to date we haven't found a person?"

Donovan was more than excited, he was decidedly worried.

His keen gray eyes narrowed and his thin wide mouth took on an expression of determination as he stared intently at the younger man.

"We've got to get at the bottom of this, Steele," he said; "another murder and there'll be a panic. Kid gloves can destroy fingerprints, the falling snow obliterate footprints outside, but it seems like there ought to be some kind of marks left by the slushy pavements on the rugs."

"Unless the murderer wore rubbers and took them off at the door," suggested Tom quietly.

"I've thought of that. I don't put much stock in footprints, anyway; too many persons have trampled on the same carpets. There ought to be traces of some kind—scraps of paper, a letter, something besides a nutty old woman saying she admitted a dead man and a crazy inventor claiming he saw a hunchback enter the Clemmons house."

"Oh, Grimstead saw him, all right, there's no question he didn't. He was too sincere in his statement."

"I guess we'll have to round up all the hunchbacks in the city and make them prove alibis," Donovan said grimly. "There isn't one employed at the Zoo, is there?"

Tom laughed. "I think not. I'll find out. I'm going over and see old Grimstead again. It seems to tickle his vanity to let him talk about the case, and, anyway, he did tell me something worth while yesterday. I may take him over to Middleton's with me."

"You might bring him in to see me," said Donovan slowly. "Queer duck, isn't he? That zoo idea may sound foolish, but it isn't."

Accordingly later in the day the detective called on the inventor in his pharmacy uptown.

"Well, well, I am glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "I didn't expect the pleasure so soon. I suppose you've read all about the Middleton case, or perhaps you have been called in upon the case?"

Tom admitted he had. He noted the old-fashioned shop with its huge ornamental bottles of red and green water which in days gone by used to be the principal advertisement of a drugstore. The old man with his near-sighted eyes peering through the horn-rimmed glasses impressed him as somehow fitting into the little shop as a relic of the past.

"Yes, I'm on the case as usual," Tom said. "I wish you would describe this hunchback to me again, and just how large the suitcase was he carried."

"I know what you are thinking, Mr. Steele," Grimstead smiled, "but it wasn't large enough to conceal an animal or a bird capable of rending a man to pieces. It was quite an ordinary suitcase, black so far as I could judge at night, and of good size, such as you or I would use in taking a long journey. The man was quite short, and wore a very long dark top-coat, the sleeves of which came far down over his hands."

"You couldn't see them?" Tom asked.

He had an idea that perhaps the hunchback, if he were the criminal, was a cripple with a hook for a hand which he might have used for a weapon. Grimstead shook his head.

"No, I didn't see his hands," he replied. There was something in the look he gave the detective which puzzled him.

"You didn't see his features?"

"No, not at any time."

"Queer what that housekeeper said about his dead eyes and livid face, wasn't it?" mused the detective. "Do you think she was lying or just working her imagination overtime?"

The old man traced a pattern with a long bony finger in the dust on the showcase; he closed his eyes speculatively.

"Perhaps she was doing neither," he said slowly. "I think that some place in this city there lurks a menace to mankind—some human monstrosity who has made murder a fine art; some one who has developed a cunning and ingenuity so baffling that all of you combined will never bring him to justice."

"You've a cheerful outlook," said Tom. "I suppose this individual will go on killing whoever and whenever he pleases, and we'll never get him! I'd like to wager you we'll have him in another week. The cleverest crook gets his some time."

"There you are mistaken," replied Grimstead quietly; "the really clever criminal is never apprehended, because he covers his crime so well no one knows it was ever committed."

The detective rubbed his chin, smiling at the old man quizzically.

"Think so? Well, maybe you're right. I don't pretend to know all there is about crime nor criminals, but I'd give a good bit to run this one to justice. Gee, that would be a feather in my cap!"

Grimstead laid a gaunt hand on the officer's shoulder as he said:

"I'll do anything in my power to help you, young man. Two heads are better than one, and I've lived a good many years and seen a great many things."

"Thanks. Would you like to go over to the Middleton house with me? You may see something of interest."

"I'd be glad to." Grimstead turned to his partner at the other end of the store and bade him close up the shop, saying that he wouldn't be back again that day. Then, taking down his greatcoat and hat, he followed the young detective to a taxi stand around the corner.

After the examination of Ezekiel Middleton had taken place the same verdict which had been rendered at the examination of the other victim was given: death by strangulation, for want of a better word, by person or persons unknown. As heretofore, no evidence had been offered; with the exception of young Middleton, who had found the body, no one had anything to say. He told of having heard his cousin admit some one into the house and into the library, but had heard no sound of voices nor of any struggle. Later he had heard a door slam, and had naturally concluded his cousin's midnight visitor had departed. As Mr. Middleton had been a trifle eccentric in his habits since the death of his wife many years before, the young man had thought nothing of callers at that time of night. When Mr. Middleton had not appeared at breakfast he had sent his servant to his room to call him, and when the latter returned saying he was not in his room, he himself had gone to the library to look for him. Upon seeing his dead body he had recalled the visitor of the night before. As in the case of the previous crime, the room was undisturbed, and there was apparently no motive for the crime.

Alfred Middleton was a good-looking, rather studious young man, with a pair of frank blue eyes and a pleasant smile, but when he admitted Steele and Grimstead his mouth was set in a grim line, and his brows were drawn in a deep frown, showing his great mental perturbation.

"Well," he said abruptly as he saw the sleuth, "have you learned anything?"

"No," the detective replied, and introduced Grimstead to him.

The secretary merely nodded and, quickly closing the hall door to keep out the wind and drifting snow, ushered them into the

reception-room. "We've got to get at this quickly," he said. "It's all very well to let that other murder go unsolved, but do you realize I was Ezekiel's cousin—a poorly paid secretary living in his house—and that by his death I come into over a million dollars?" He paused in his panther-like pacing of the length of the room.

"Good Lord, no!" exclaimed Tom. "I don't wonder you are upset. You certainly had a motive to make away with your cousin. However, a good alibi will clear you as far as that is concerned." He instinctively liked Middleton's straightforward manner. "Did you know you were your cousin's heir?"

"Yes, worse luck, so did all my friends. It'll create no end of talk. I was the only relative he possessed, and I don't think he had any great love for me, our tastes were so dissimilar, but he had a sort of family affection which made him cling to me. We never had any open ruptures nor serious arguments, but I don't deny he used to annoy me pretty much. He was—well—er—you'd call it penurious, almost stingy, I guess. But his death has upset me more than you can imagine."

"I can readily understand that," said Grimstead, who had never ceased to stare at the young man from the time they had entered the house. Steele requested to be taken to the library, and the secretary led the way to the room where the body of his cousin still lay, just as he had been discovered in the morning. On opening the door he said in a strained voice:

"Mr. Steele, I want to tell you something. To-day, when I first saw my cousin, I was too upset to remember anything, and when the inspector and the other officers arrived all I could think of was the crime; but since then something I discovered this morning has puzzled me a great deal, so much so that if you hadn't have come here when you did I should have sent for you or gone to you."

"What is it?" Steele's quick eye was taking in all the details of the long high-ceilinged room with the shelves of books on either wall, the sombre-hued rugs with naps an inch thick.

"This morning as I opened the door a peculiar chemical odor greeted my nostrils, like a disinfectant of some kind, but as the odor disappeared so quickly it wasn't until later that I realized Mrs. Lawrence, the housekeeper, couldn't have been in the room, and no one else would use a disinfectant of any kind in the house."

Grimstead whirled about quickly. "What kind of a disinfectant?" he cried.

"I don't know. I can't even describe the odor; it was unlike any other I had ever smelled, and, as I said, it vanished almost as quickly as I detected it. But of this I'm certain. It was a powder."

"How do you know that?" The old man's queer slate-colored eyes seemed to blaze in their sockets, and Tom marveled at his tense interest.

"Because, when I first discovered my cousin, on his coat sleeve and on his shirt were flecks of a white dust, and all over the polished mahogany of the table I saw little particles of the same. In a sort of subconscious way I wondered at Mrs. Lawrence's neglecting to dust the place; then later, when I called her to task about it, she declared she had. I was going to call the detective's attention to the dust this afternoon, when to my amazement I discovered the white powder had completely vanished, and Mrs. Lawrence stoutly declares she has not touched anything! Naturally I said nothing, for I'd about come to the conclusion I imagined both the odor and the dust."

Grimstead's face had grown ashen. He caught the secretary's hand feverishly. "A white powder which smelled and vanished!" he gasped. "Where—where was it?"

Middleton pointed toward the table. To Tom's amazement the old inventor began sniffing at the polished wood, then dropped on his hands and knees beside the body, digging into the rug and smelling of it. Before either Tom or Middleton could speak he rose abruptly. His face was ghastly. He waved his hand in an effort to speak, gave a strange, choking cry and toppled forward. Middleton's outstretched arms saved him from falling prone to the floor.

CHAPTER FIVE

"WHAT ails him!" the detective exclaimed. They lifted the prostrate form of the old man and laid him upon a large leather divan near the window, and Middleton brought a glass of wine from a decanter near by. As the secretary forced the liquid between Grimstead's teeth, Tom bent to examine the rug beside the body, but before he could smell of it Middleton exclaimed:

"I wouldn't if I were you. Something on it knocked him out. It may be dangerous. Wait until he comes to; you can ask him what it was."

Tom did not heed his warning, but leaning closer, sniffed at the rug and the dead man's clothing. He detected a sickish, rather sweet chemical odor, one with which he was not familiar and that unquestionably would never have attracted his attention unless brought to his notice, but it had no effect on him other than being distasteful.

"You're right," he said, rising; "there's been a chemical of some kind used in this room. I smell a very faint odor of it. No doubt it was the powder you saw. I can't tell what it is nor why it disappeared so quickly. Grimstead is a chemist; perhaps he will know. Peculiar it had such an effect on him; the old chap's heart must be weak."

"Do you know where he lives? He looks very ill to me."

"Yes, down on the Square." Just then Grimstead stirred and opened his eyes. "Feeling any better, Mr. Grimstead?"

"What happened?" murmured the old man.

"You fainted."

"Yes, yes—I remember. I feel very ill. Do you mind calling me a taxi. I want to get home."

"It was the odor on the rug knocked you out," Tom continued, hoping to lead him on, but Grimstead stared at him blankly, and seeing how really ill he looked, the detective decided to wait until the next day to inquire of him his opinion concerning the chemical used. Grimstead seemed strangely shaken and feeble and old to be thinking seriously of something which had unquestionably stirred him.

When the taxi for which Middleton had telephoned arrived they assisted him into it, and the secretary surprised Steele by volunteering to accompany the inventor home.

"He may keel over again," Middleton said in explanation. "And the detective, grateful for his absence, which would permit of some investigation on his own part, unhampered by a spectator, said he thought it would be wise for him to go along with the old man.

As the cab disappeared around the corner Tom returned to the library. The men whom Donovan had stationed in the house to keep an eye on the body were just outside the door, and their looks showed a certain resentment at Tom's return and evident dissatisfaction at their reports on the case.

"What's the dope, Steele?" one of them inquired. "Think you've learned something the rest of us haven't?"

"Not so clever as that, Miles. I take my hat off to you for a bunch of clever boys." Tom smiled.

"Ah, go on wid yer sarcasm!" exclaimed the other man, a red-haired, ruddy-faced Irishman. "I don't see as you've done such a deuce of a lot yourself that you do be rubbin' it into us."

"I'm not rubbing it into you," Tom replied. "I don't think any of us can pat himself on the back for being a swift worker in this case." He opened the library door and stepped in. "By the way," he said suddenly, turning on the threshold, "I supposed you noticed the little round print on the rug here?"

"What little round print?" snapped Miles. "I see you didn't."

The Irishman laughed. "You mean the mark left by the French heel? Sure I noticed it."

"Attaboy, Ryan!" said Tom; "but have you noticed the housekeeper's feet? Mrs. Lawrence, I mean?"

Ryan shook his head.

"Well, I have, and I'm thinking they were never intended for French heels. I suppose you know she's the only woman in the

household. Ask her to come here, Ryan. I'd like to see her shoes."

Ryan sullenly pressed a button on the wall and a few moments later a tall, gaunt woman in her early forties appeared. She had a strong, rather handsome face, with wide blackish-green eyes set deep under shaggy brows and heavily fringed with black lashes a shade darker than her hair. Her mouth was large, determined-looking, and her face had a clear, healthy pallor. Although her manner was composed, Tom could see she was laboring under a great strain, and that she avoided looking at the silent figure which dominated the room. Her large, well-shaped hands were very white and capable-looking, and she carried her loose-jointed body straight like an Indian. She wore a pair of felt bath slippers, which struck a note of discord with her otherwise well-ordered costume.

"You weren't wearing those shoes this morning, Mrs. Lawrence?" he said, glancing down at her feet.

The woman's expression never changed. She replied in a well-modulated voice with a Southern accent: "No, sir, I wasn't. I don't wear such shoes to work in!"

"I suppose that is the impress of your heel on that rug, Mrs. Lawrence."

"I suppose it is, sir; that rug marks badly; the nape is very thick, you know. Mr. Middleton was particular of it and made me wear house shoes always to keep the surface smooth. Perhaps I forgot yesterday and trampled on it with hard heels."

"Do you mind walking on it again, Mrs. Lawrence?"

"Certainly not." She walked across the room and back again, but although she was a large woman she was not a particularly heavy one, and the imprint left on the rug was very faint beside the others Tom had discovered. He studied for a moment, then said abruptly:

"Will you let me see your shoe, Mrs. Lawrence. You don't mind removing it, do you?"

For the fraction of a second she hesitated, as though she were going to refuse; then she removed the slipper and handed it to him.

Tom turned it over and whistled as he noted the sole. "Mrs. Lawrence, you never had this shoe on before, did you?"

The woman's gaze never faltered, but a slow flush crept up around the temples where her hair was tinged with gray. The wide frank eyes became somber, filled with a sort of flame.

"I can't answer you that question," she replied, "but it has nothing to do with the death of Mr. Middleton."

"That's a very strange attitude to take, Mrs. Lawrence," Tom said impatiently; "don't you realize you are laying yourself open for a great many conjectures, that everything pertaining to this room and the death of Mr. Middleton is of interest to the police?"

"You're a very wise young man," said the housekeeper with sudden fire; "if I have to talk, I will when the law compels me, and not before; but if you're as wise as you think you are you'll realize that whether I ever made the marks on the carpet or not, it was not these heels!" She snatched the shoe from Tom's hand and pulled it on her foot. "Now, if you've nothing further to say, I'm going back to my room. You can find me there at any time, at least until he's removed. I'm not afraid of the law, so I'm in no danger of running away."

Before Tom could reply to her extraordinary statement she swept out of the library, and he could not but admire the dignity of her and the straight carriage of her tall, large-boned body.

"She's a queer one!" snickered Ryan; "you couldn't phase her, not if you tried the third degree on her. I asked her this morning what had become of Middleton's waste-paper basket, and she said she had taken it out of his room yesterday and had neglected to return it. I bet she lied, but there was no basket in here, so I had to believe her."

"I wonder," mused Tom. That Mrs. Lawrence knew something concerning the murder he was certain, but considering Middleton had unquestionably met his death through the same agency as Clemmons and

that it was well-nigh impossible to associate her with that crime, he was baffled.

While he was cogitating young Middleton returned, having driven Grimstead home and given him over to his little niece, who met them at the door.

"Who is Mrs. Lawrence, Middleton?" the detective asked abruptly.

"Lawrence—why, she's the housekeeper here, sort of a general houseworker, in fact."

"Yes, I know that, but who is she?"

"Lord love you, I don't know. My cousin wasn't much given to discussing his private affairs, and she was employed when I first came here to live. I've an idea she's a Southerner from her accent, and I think she has seen better days; something about her indicates it. By George"—he paused abruptly and bit his lips—"now I have it!" He snapped his fingers and walked about before continuing. "You know I've been wondering where I'd seen that old chap before; now I know. He called here once to see Mrs. Lawrence!"

"Who? Grimstead?"

"Yes, I'm sure it was the same man. No two persons could look like he does. I wonder what they have in common? Why don't you ask her if she knows him?"

"Why don't I make all kinds of a fool of myself?" said the detective. "She'd say it was none of my business whom she knew!"

"Maybe his faint had something to do with her," Middleton continued enthusiastically. "Maybe we've stumbled onto a clue, Mr. Steele."

The officer laughed. "I think I have, but not the kind you think. Now don't ask me any question, Middleton, but under some pretext get Mrs. Lawrence out of the house long enough for me to examine her bedroom thoroughly, will you?"

"Good Lord, you don't think——" The boy gasped.

"I said you weren't to ask any questions," said Tom good-naturedly; "will you do as I request?"

"Sure I will, sir." He left the room, and a few minutes later Tom heard the outer door slam, and then saw Mrs. Lawrence's tall figure on the stoop. After that Middleton led the way up to her room. There was little enough about it to indicate it was occupied by a woman; all the little feminine touches which go to make a chamber dainty and cozy were lacking. In its austerity and lack of warmth it suggested a cell in a convent, but somehow the personality of its owner seemed redolent everywhere. An open clothes-press revealed the woman's meagre wardrobe—a few simple, very severe gowns, a hat or two, and tucked away under the bed was a pair of high French-heeled slippers! These Tom appropriated. Near the window was a writing desk and a wastepaper basket. It was the basket which attracted Tom's attention because of its ornateness and dissimilarity to the other pieces of furniture in the room. However, it proved to be empty. Tom's look of disgust made Middleton laugh.

"What did you expect to find?" he asked.

The detective did not reply, but instead asked him if he had ever seen the basket before.

"Yes, I think so, or one like it used to be in the library. What's she doing with it up here?"

"That's what I'd like to know." He lifted the basket and examined it inside and out, then set it down with a grunt. "I suppose you opened and assorted all your cousin's mail?"

"All except that which was marked personal."

"Did he get much of that kind?"

"Not a great deal. He wasn't a very sociable person, nor particularly popular. Why?"

"I was thinking he probably received some kind of a communication which interested Mrs. Lawrence, that's all."

As they went downstairs again Mrs. Lawrence came in from the outside. Her tight-fitting old-fashioned coat was covered with flakes of snow, and her cheeks red from contact with the brisk wind. Her hair had become loosened and softened the austerity of her features, giving her a momentary beauty. She stared at the headquarters man suspiciously and, passing him, went up to her room.

"Old Grimstead has a pretty niece," Middleton said suddenly.

"Has he?"

"Yes. It must be very lonesome for a young girl like her with so old a man in that gloomy house. I'm going to call on her again."

The detective looked at the boy's glowing young face and thought what a cure little old Cupid could be for all tragedies of life if he chose to be. Already Middleton's cares and worries about what had happened in his home had for the time being been banished by a single dart from the little love god's sheaf aimed at his heart when in the presence of a charming girl.

"Did Grimstead ask you to call?"

"No, but she did. She said she didn't know many persons here."

"Maybe the old man scares visitors away."

"He'd have a fat chance scaring me off! But I guess the old codger is all right, just a little self-centred and not interested in strangers."

Steele shook hands with him when he departed, promised to keep him posted should anything develop, and asked him to telephone him if he learned anything of interest.

Two hours later he heard from Middleton. During his absence Mrs. Lawrence had packed all her belongings and gone away without leaving any address.

CHAPTER SIX

THE following day Steele called at Grimstead's home to inquire about the inventor's health, and was admitted to the house by Natalie, who informed him her uncle was really very ill and confined to his bed, unable to see any one.

"I'm terribly sorry," said the detective. "If there's anything I can do let me know."

The girl's dark eyes filled with tears. "I don't understand it at all," she said. "Uncle is never ill, and now all of a sudden he seems to have just gone to pieces and isn't himself any more. It frightens me. He's all I have in the world." She smiled wistfully and added: "I'll tell him you are here and what you said, but I don't think he will see you."

However, a few minutes later she returned and said her uncle would be glad to have him step up to his room.

"Well, well, Mr. Grimstead!" exclaimed the detective, taking the feverish hand the old man extended toward him. "What's the idea?"

The other's eyes, robbed of the powerful lenses, seemed great dark coals in their sunken sockets. He waved toward his niece.

"Run along, Natalie; I've something to say to Mr. Steele. This is my niece, Natalie Grimstead, Mr. Steele," he added. "She's a dear child. I love her." After the door closed behind the girl he motioned the officer to draw his chair close to the bed.

"I don't want any one to hear what I have to say, young man," he said abruptly. "And I want you to give me your word of honor not to repeat this unless it becomes an absolute necessity to do so. What do you say?"

"It's a go," Tom replied.

"At first I thought I would not give my knowledge to any one, but since coming home I've made a discovery that shows me I cannot work alone. No doubt you noticed my agitation yesterday when young Mr. Middleton mentioned the white powder on the rugs?"

"Yes."

"Have you had an examination made of those rugs?"

"It is being done now."

"You detected an unusual odor to them yourself?"

"Yes, after you had sniffed at them."

"Mr. Steele, the powder of which Mr. Middleton spoke is a new and powerful chemical which will completely destroy any traces of footprints, fingermarks, and every indication that a person has ever been in a room, and in time completely destroy the rugs themselves!"

At this extraordinary statement Tom

started; before he could speak the other continued:

"A door opening and admitting air into the room will cause the powder to vanish, dissolve, as it were, and leave no trace of its having been used except for the very faint odor which would never be detected but for some one knowing of its presence. How do I know this? Because, Mr. Steele, I invented the powder myself!"

"You!"

"As you know, I am a chemist, also an inventor. The latter is a hobby of mine. For a number of years I have been interested in criminology in all of its phases; never mind why I became interested. In my workshop upstairs I have invented, manufactured and mixed various things which might cause death."

"Good God!" exclaimed the detective, springing to his feet.

The old man laughed faintly. "Don't look so alarmed, Mr. Steele; I am not a murderer myself, and have no intention of becoming one. It is simply the ways and the means by which crimes can be committed which interest me. I used to puzzle and wonder what went on within the minds of criminals, why even a master mind is always detected in his crime, why no foundation was laid secure enough to hide the traces; so I began studying, perfecting what I thought would absolutely blot out anything that would give away the identity of the criminal. Understand, Mr. Steele, that I never had any intention of using it or giving it to the world. I was just doing it for my own satisfaction. For months I worked upon chemicals until I hit upon the powder, which, as I said, absolutely destroys all traces of a presence in a room. You can imagine my distress when I discovered it had been used in connection with this murder, and, I know unquestionably, with the other crimes of a similar nature. At first I fancied some one else had solved the same problem I had until I returned home. I immediately went upstairs, where I do all my experimenting and keep all papers. I was horror-stricken to find that the formula for this powder had disappeared. I had been robbed!"

"Mr. Grimstead!"

"The loss of it has made me ill. With it in his power the criminal can do a great deal more harm than otherwise, and I feel as though I were adding to his crimes. We must get that formula, Mr. Steele. The man who is committing all these murders is the man who has it!"

"The task ahead of us is herculean, Mr. Grimstead. With no footprints, no fingermarks, with absolutely no trace of the man himself, how are we going to start even to find this man? You *say* you have seen a hunchback with a large suitcase."

"I *did* see him!" exclaimed the inventor hotly. "Are you insinuating that I am lying?"

"No—no, indeed, mut——" Tom hesitated.

"The housekeeper at the Clemmons home saw him also," continued the old man.

"Ye-es. May I see this laboratory or workshop, whatever you call it, Mr. Grimstead?"

The other hesitated. "I'd rather you didn't, Mr. Steele, that is, until I am up and around and able to show it to you myself. My niece has never been up there, and I'd rather she never went into the room. I have my reasons."

Steele's usually good-natured mouth set in a grim line and his gray eyes grew steely. "Just as you like, sir, but you are putting an obstacle in my way. You tell me a valuable formula has been stolen and expect me to find it, yet refuse me any aid in tracing it."

Grimstead closed his eyes as though thinking deeply. "I will describe the paper as nearly as possible to you; possibly that will help."

The officer took down notes as the old man told him as much as he could remember; then, when Grimstead promised him a view of his workshop on the morrow if he could leave his bed, he made his departure.

As he stepped from the stoop which led to the stairs outside he caught a glimpse of a man just vanishing into the hallway of the house next-door. That glimpse caused Steele's heart to give a thump, caused him to rush madly down the stairs

into the little front yard of the adjoining house and ring the doorbell. For the man he had seen was a hunchback, and he carried a large black suitcase.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IN answer to the detective's ring a slatternly woman in a red wrapper with a wisp of gray hair twisted into an untidy knot on the back of her head came to the door. She peered at him with red-rimmed pigish eyes, squinting painfully as though the glare from the snow-covered pavements hurt them.

"Well, what d'ye want?" she snapped. "It's cold, and I haven't a mind to stand here all the day with the door open. If you're looking for a room, I ain't got anything but the top-floor hall bedroom vacant, and there ain't no heat in that and nothing but a skylight, and it won't be vacant till to-morrow noway, as the present lodger don't leave until then."

"I'm not looking for a room," said the detective quietly. "I didn't know you rented rooms."

"No? Then where's your eyesight? There's the sign on the window if you can read. Gawd knows it's a hard life and a poor living what with coal the price it is and roomers playing me dirt and skipping out, but I have to do something. Who d'ye want to see? I don't allow any lady roomers to receive guests in their rooms."

"I didn't come to see a lady, but a man."

"Who?"

"I don't know his name. He's a hunchback."

"You've got the wrong house, then," she said. "I ain't against them, naturally believing if you rub up agin their hump it's good luck, but I hain't got no cripple livin' with me."

"My good woman, I distinctly saw a hunchback man enter this house not five minutes ago!"

"Quit your foolin'!" she laughed derisively.

"He used a key, so he must be a lodger. If you are trying to protect him, I advise you to be careful. Come on, now. Where is he?"

"Who are you?" she asked suddenly.

Steele stepped inside the dimly lighted hallway with its aromas of boiled dinner and cheap perfume and closed the door with a click behind him.

"You—you ain't a detective?" she gasped.

"Yes, I am."

"Well, my Gawd! I ain't got nothin' to hide. This place is absolutely respectable, as any one can tell you, and I hope I drop dead if I've got ary a hunchback here; but if you want to go snoopin' around and see, go as fur as you like. There's the parlor, front to your right. I've rented that to a playwriter and his wife who acts at the Hippodrome."

She knocked and an anemic long-haired youth opened the door. Tom merely glanced inside, catching a view of a girl in a scarlet kimono setting a rickety table in the centre of the room, evidently preparing the noonday meal.

The landlady nodded at him and closed the door with an apology; then she led the way farther down the hall to the back parlor, which housed a couple of chorus girls, who at present were absent. Across from them was another very small room adjoining what had once been the kitchen in the days when the house had been a home of affluence. This room was dark, and had for its light a very small window which opened into a court adjoining the Grimstead home.

As the blowsy landlady knocked on the door it was opened by a young man, rather fair, quite tall and shabbily dressed in a dark suit. He had the pallor of a student, and wore a puzzled expression when he saw his visitors. The three-quarter bed with its tattered comforters dragging onto the floor, the open wardrobe trunk, delapidated bureau and two chairs certainly offered no hiding-place for the hunchback, and the woman chuckled at Tom's baffled look.

"Was I right or not?" she muttered.

"What is it, Mrs. Simmons?" the young man asked, staring at the detective.

"This feller thought you was some one else, that's all."

Steele was grateful to her for not mentioning his profession.

"Well," she continued as she closed the door, "you see I ain't got any cripples here."

"How many floors have you?" Tom asked abruptly.

"Three and a basement. I live in the basement. I s'pose you want to look through it?"

"I do."

A prolonged search through the entire house gave him no satisfaction. It was as though the floors had opened up and swallowed the hunchback, or that Tom had had an optical illusion.

But a surprise on the top floor awaited him. At the door of the room which she said would be vacant on the morrow she paused.

"I don't like to disturb the lady," she said; "she's packin' up to leave, and she's class."

"Class?"

"Yes. She's so genteel and ain't very strong. I don't know if she's in even. She's so quiet I never know she's about."

"What's her business?"

"I dunno. I reckon she's got money or folks. She don't say, and I ain't one to ask questions."

"Well, I'm sorry to disturb her, but I think it's necessary. Suppose you knock on the door."

This she did.

As the door opened Steele drew back in astonishment. The tall, dignified woman, her slender form wrapped in a quilted silk kimono, was unquestionably Middleton's housekeeper, Mrs. Lawrence. She looked at him steadily without recognition.

"Mrs. Lawrence," he stammered.

"You're mistaken," she said quietly; "that isn't my name. What is it, Mrs. Simmons?"

"My mistake," said the officer, and the woman abruptly closed the door in his face.

"How long has she lived here?" he asked of the landlady.

"Mis' Day? A couple of years or so."

The detective was nonplused.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THAT night at dinner Steele informed his wife that he was deserting her temporarily, as he intended to become one Aloysius Webb, a retired college professor, and was going to live downtown in Washington Square.

Professor Webb rented the room at Mrs. Simmons's which the woman he had taken for Middleton's housekeeper had vacated. Mrs. Simmons either could not or would not tell him where she had gone. His reason for this was that the skylight which opened onto the roof also led to the roof of Grimstead's house, and that there was a skylight there also; Steele figured it might be interesting to see the old inventor at work in his shop in the attic.

He called upon Inspector Donovan dressed as Professor Webb, and despite the chief's worry over the situation, he had a good laugh at the make-up. However, he sobered instantly when the young detective told him of the strange information Grimstead had given him and of the hunchback who had so mysteriously disappeared.

"Damn funny!" he muttered. "The old geezer will bear watching. You did wisely in taking that room."

"Ye-es," Tom replied doubtfully, "though I'd stake my life on the old man's integrity; just a queer bent he has that makes him want to invent such things. He may be nutty, you know, and be talking about a thing that doesn't exist. A powder that can do what he claims sounds rather fishy to me."

"Well," said Donovan dryly, "you have to admit that so far there have been no traces of the criminal found anywhere. Maybe the old sport has hit on something. It opens up all kinds of possibilities for the criminal."

"You know, chief, I'm going batty over this thing. If we don't get a clue of some value pretty soon you'll have to lock me up. Well, we'll see what I learn at Mrs. Simmons's rooming-house."

As he rose to go the telephone on Donovan's desk tinkled, and the inspector took down the receiver. Steele, watching him,

saw his pupils dilate and a grim look settle about his mouth.

"By George!" he exclaimed as he hung up the receiver, "maybe we've hit on something! That was Alvin Summerly who just telephoned. He says he received a crazy letter from an inventor, begging an interview with him, and the whole thing sounds so queer he wants to see us about it. Suppose we go over to his house. I've a feeling the trip won't be in vain."

"I can't go like this," said the young detective.

Sizing up his disguise, Donovan laughed. "Not in my car; that would give you away; take a taxi and come to this address." He wrote it out on a slip of paper and handed it to him.

Steele watched Donovan step into his low red roadster, then he hailed a taxi and followed him. Up Park avenue they drove, and before one of the most pretentious apartment houses the red roadster stopped. Almost simultaneously Tom's cab did likewise. Donovan fumed around impatiently when an ebony-hued elevator boy informed them they had to be announced, and as the car shot upwards he chewed viciously on his cigar.

Mr. Summerly himself met them at the door. At seeing Steele he drew back in dismay, saying:

"Inspector, this is confidential"; but Donovan hastened to explain that the white-haired stranger was in reality one of his most valuable assistants.

Summerly apologized and, leading them into a hallway, escorted them to his study, where a log fire gave an atmosphere of cheery coziness to what would otherwise be an austere uninviting room. He invited them to be seated before the fireplace, offered them cigars and a drink, then sat down facing them.

He was an elderly, rather stout gentleman with a ruddy complexion and a reddish brown Vandyke beard. Tom had a feeling that he had been a man of the people, and had not yet grown used to the luxury which surrounded him.

"I hope I haven't made you gentlemen call here on a wild-goose chase," he said by way of introduction, "but I've read with interest the stories of the murders which have taken place in the last week, and know that both men have been as I am, a wealthy bachelor living alone with apparently no enemies; consequently when I received this letter from a stranger, requesting an interview with me which would be for the betterment of science, I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to ask you to call."

"Let's see the letter," said Donovan abruptly. Summers handed him a small square envelope, from which he took an ordinary piece of notepaper upon which a few lines were written in an irregular hand, with an inky smudge almost obliterating the signature. He read the note aloud:

MR. ALVIN SUMMERLY,
Park Avenue, New York.

DEAR MR. SUMMERLY: I am unknown to you, but I have known of you for years, and believe you to be a man of integrity and progress. Because I believe you to have the good of humanity in your heart, because I realize what science has done and is doing for the world, I am writing you to request an interview. I am an inventor, and have spent my life on the perfection of something which will have untold value for us all, especially for men who have passed the meridian of life and wish to stay young. As I am employed during the day and far into the night, is it too much to ask you to permit me to call at twelve p. m. Thursday evening? If you do not reply I shall come; if you do not wish to see me, drop me a line at Post-office Box 21.

Sincerely yours,
X. Y. ZERBIA.

Donovan said nothing after reading the note, but studied the writing intently. At last he spoke:

"I should say the fellow was insane, judging from the writing, but it would take an expert penman to prove it. I'll take this with me and have O'Leary examine it. I think, Mr. Summerly, I'd drop him a note and tell him to call. It may be straight goods, but I'll admit it looks queer. I'll be

here Thursday night to see that nothing happens."

"Thank you."

Donovan rose, and Tom followed his example. He was a bit puzzled at their host's obvious nervousness, and more so when Donovan refused to discuss the event with him.

As they parted in the doorway, Donovan to go to his car, Steele to his cab, the inspector said:

"Stick to your post on the square, Steele. I'll put an operative in the post-office to keep an eye on Box 21. There's going to be something doing, or my name isn't Donovan."

The street lights had begun to flicker and a wintry gloom had settled upon the park when the detective arrived at the brick house where Mrs. Simmons kept her roomers. As he paid his driver he glanced over his shoulder at the Grimstead house and wondered how the old inventor was doing. Then, as he turned into his own gateway, he gave a whistle of surprise, for the Grimstead front door opened and Alfred Middleton stepped out. For a moment he was tempted to speak to the young man, then remembered his new identity of Professor Webb, and merely shrugged his shoulders as he entered the dimly lighted hallway which led to his new quarters, thinking that the other young man was making progress in his love affair.

Every one in the old house seemed to be sleeping, for not a sound issued from any of the doors as he passed them. He hesitated a moment before he inserted the key into the lock at his own door, then entered and remained for some little time in darkness. At last he placed a chair under the skylight and, stepping upon it, lifted the glass inclosing the passage and, raising his body, pulled himself onto the roof. The snow was soft and yielding, and deadened any noise his foot pressure might make. He cautiously stepped onto the roof of the adjoining house, scarcely hoping to find a light in the attic, but to his surprise as he reached the skylight he saw that old Grimstead's workshop was fully lighted and that the old inventor himself, evidently recovered from his recent illness, was there.

At first Steele fancied he was alone, until he saw a shadow clearly outlined on the wall opposite to him. It was all the detective could do to repress a start of astonishment, for the shadow was clearly that of a woman, not the slender delicate curves of the inventor's little niece nor the buxom obese body of the ancient negress, but the long, angular outline of a tall extremely thin woman. Presently the shadow vanished and its owner came into his line of vision. In the instant he recognized the Middleton housekeeper, Mrs. Lawrence!

"What is she doing here?" he muttered.

They seemed to be having a heated argument, for the woman gesticulated wildly and moved her head from side to side with a nervous intensity. The inventor seemed to be blindly furious. Suddenly he glanced upward, and Tom met his eyes. The detective quickly drew back and made a hasty retreat to his lodgings.

CHAPTER NINE

THE next day when he reported at Donovan's office he found Ryan, a red-haired officer, in a conference with his chief.

"Well," said the latter as Steele entered the room, "it seems the writer of the mysterious letter, our friend X. Y. Zerbia, is a woman."

"That so?" said Tom. He lighted a cigarette and dropped into a chair facing the inspector.

"You don't seem surprised." Donovan looked annoyed.

"I'm not, but let's hear about it."

Ryan turned to him a trifle startled, for he had not penetrated the professor's disguise. When he realized that it was Steele in the much frayed frock coat and gray beard he laughed.

"Yeh, I hung around the post-office like you said, chief, and managed to get in line near Box 21. I waited a long time before any one showed up. Believe me, I got handed a jolt when a tall sort of gray-

haired dame mosied up and opened that box. I followed her till she got on the subway, but I lost her in the crush at Times Square. I got her description to a T, and——"

"I know who she is," said Steele quietly. "Unless I'm all wrong she's the Middleton housekeeper, Mrs. Lawrence!"

"What!" Donovan exclaimed. "How do you make that? You're crazy!"

Steele explained what he had seen the night before. "I don't know what she is to old man Grimstead, but she has something to do with these murders, and he knows it, and that's why he is so cut up over losing his formula. I think she stole it; that's probably what they were arguing about."

"Maybe the old codger did 'em himself," ventured Ryan.

"Nonsense"—Donovan waved aside his suggestion—"and it's rot to think the woman did. We'll keep an eye on both of them, however, and if necessary arrest the dame. Thursday night will turn the trick, for whoever this alphabetic person is I think he'll show up at Summerly's at midnight, and we'll be there to welcome him. Now beat it, Ryan; I've got some business with Steele."

After the Irishman made his departure Donovan lost his nonchalant manner and became the alert, intense man of the law. He drew his chair close to his young assistant's and, placing one hand on Tom's knee, said abruptly:

"Steele, I've hit on the motive for these crimes. It dates away back, but it gives us a good lead."

"Yes?"

"Twenty years ago these two men who have been murdered served on a jury which sentenced a chap by the name of Downing to be hanged——"

"Hanged? Why——" interrupted Steele, surprised.

"In Louisville, Kentucky. Whether they knew each other before or not I don't know; whether they kept up an acquaintanceship doesn't matter, but this much I got from Summerly, who was one of the jurors. At any rate, they all voted death to Downing. He had committed a foul, cold-blooded murder, and they made him pay; probably in later years it passed from their minds. Downing was married and had a child. The boy was sent to an orphanage, for the wife went insane and was confided in an institution for the mentally defective."

"Great Lord!" ejaculated Steele. "You know old Grimstead is a Southerner and—— What became of the son?"

"Summerly didn't know. As a matter of fact I had to probe his memory trying to find something in his past that would make him fear for his life. I got busy and wired all the Kentucky institutions for the insane, and discovered that Mrs. Downing had been released as cured some ten years ago. Going into the record, I found that Middleton and Clemmons served on this jury which convicted Downing. I think we at last have the tangible clue we have been looking for."

The young officer studied a moment. "But Summerly's life hasn't been threatened," he said at last. "Aren't you jumping at conclusions that the fact he was a juror with these others puts him in danger?"

"It has been threatened," Donovan replied grimly. "From time to time he has received letters saying that some day retribution would come; he paid no attention to them until two of these men were killed; then came the letter which caused him to send for me. The handwriting on that piece of paper is identical with all the anonymous notes he has received before!"

CHAPTER TEN

AT a little after eight o'clock Thursday night Summerly's butler admitted Donovan and Steele through the back entrance. They found the financier in his library, where he was awaiting them. He was rather pale and obviously nervous.

"I hope I haven't gotten you gentlemen here for no reason," he apologized; "we may be dealing only with a harmless inventor, or——"

"Best to take no chances," interrupted Donovan.

"Have you dined? I hope not, as I haven't, and would like your company."

They hadn't, and he led the way into the dining-room, where they spent an hour over a long, formally served meal.

After dinner they played three-handed bridge until twelve o'clock. As the hands pointed the midnight hour Donovan pushed back his chair and rose to his feet. "We'd better get out of sight, Steele. Summerly's visitor is due to arrive at any moment."

Off of the library was a small alcove separated from the other room with heavy velvet curtains. This was fitted up as a den. Donovan and the young detective stepped into this room and concealed themselves behind the curtains.

They had waited possibly fifteen minutes when a sharp ring at the front-door bell caused them to tauten and their host to cease his tiger-like pacing of the library floor.

Listening intently, Steele heard the butler open the door and address a caller. A moment later the library door opened and Summerly's visitor entered. Through the folds of the joining curtains the hidden men saw a weird figure come into the room, carefully closing the door behind him. He was a small, very hunchbacked individual, wearing a long Inverness coat and a slouch hat pulled well down over a shaggy mop of iron-gray hair. His face was so livid a pallor as to be almost greenish in hue; his eyes seemed to burn in deep-sunken sockets. He carried a large black suitcase, which he placed on the floor near the chair Summerly indicated for him to use.

"Mr. Summerly?" The hunchback spoke in a hollow, peculiarly far-away voice.

"Yes. You are—Mr. Zerbia?"

"I am. Are we alone?"

"Yes. I am—well—rather at a loss to know why you have called. Suppose we get at once to the nature of your visit. I too am a busy man, usually retiring early."

"In due time—in due time," said the other. He did not sit, but stared intently at the financier. "I suppose, Mr. Summerly, you are like all men who have passed the meridian of life and would like to turn time backwards and be young again?"

"If such a thing were possible," said the other impatiently.

"You find life very sweet, don't you? You have a great deal to live for?"

"Yes. I suppose so."

The crippled man bent awkwardly and unfastened the clasp on his suitcase, slowly lifting to view something which at first appeared to be a mass of steel wires and metal rods. He placed it on the floor and, adjusting a screw here and there, gave it a twist. It sprang upwards quickly, taking on the shape of a suit of armor—something like a man of metal and steel.

"Ingenious, yes?" he chuckled. He lifted an arm and showed long, claw-like hands attached to it. "Are you sure we are alone?" he asked abruptly.

"Positively."

"What is behind those curtains?"

"A small private den. See, it is empty." Summerly crossed the room and drew enough of the drapery to show the darkened space beyond. "Why are you so insistent that we be alone?" he asked.

"Because of my invention. One cannot be too careful of anything like this. It is only to a chosen few I am showing its wonders." The hunchback moved slowly, painfully toward the financier, dragging his metal contrivance with him. The metal instrument was within an arm's length of the financier, its long rods with the claw-like hands outstretched, almost touching his throat. He stared at it in amazement, unable to keep the tremor from his voice as he asked:

"And what is your invention? How can this thing benefit mankind?"

"Shall I show you?" chuckled the hunchback. Before Summerly could reply the other pressed a spring in the instrument, the arms shot forward, and the claws grasped the horrified man's throat. As he struggled endeavoring to cry out the hunchback laughed wildly, dancing before him.

"You love life, don't you! Well, in a moment yours will be snuffed out just as you snuffed out Albert Downing's, and no one will know the reason!" His maniacal

laugh died as Steele and Donovan sprang from behind the curtains, the former flinging himself bodily upon the hunchback, while Donovan pressed the spring which released the murderous claws. Summerly sank to the floor, an inert heap, his throat torn and bleeding from the treacherous steel pressure, but he was alive.

The intended murderer struggled with his captors, and it took their combined efforts to secure his wrists with irons. In the battle his slouch hat tumbled to the floor and with it a wig of tousled iron-gray hair.

"Great God! He's a woman!" cried Donovan. At that the hunchback straightened and flung back the enveloping cloak. Steele looked at her steadily. Then he shouted:

"It's Mrs. Lawrence!"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MORGAN GRIMSTEAD walked into Donovan's office the next day. He had a strange story to tell, but one that fitted into the facts that Summerly had already told the inspector.

"The woman you arrested as Dora Lawrence is in reality Dora Downing," he said. "She is my sister. As you know, she is insane, and has been ever since they hanged her husband, whom she adored. The disgrace of his crime and execution drove me from Kentucky and her to an asylum. Though they later released her, she had not really regained her sanity. She had one obsession, revenge upon the jurors who had convicted her husband. It was the clumsy bungling of Downing's crime that got me interested in ways and means to avoid detection, merely a hobby, but a dangerous one, as I have since found out. I lost track of Dora for a good many years, and when I met her again I fancied she was a normal woman, otherwise I would never have shown her the interior of my workshop. I invented the clawing death, thinking that perhaps the machine might be used in warfare or by executioners, but I hid it away in a closet and thought little about it until I began to read of these murders. When I discovered that my vanishing powder had been used I went to look for the machine and found it had been stolen along with the formula for the powder. I was panicstricken. I did not want to say anything to throw suspicion upon my sister, but knowing her obsession for revenge, I feared the worst: that she had stolen them.

"When two days ago I confronted her with the question she admitted it. I determined to have her sent to an asylum again, but discovered she had left the Middleton home. I could only wait for her reappearance and pray that she had nothing to do with these murders." Grimstead bowed his head in his hands.

"I'd rather if you could"—the old inventor stumbled over his words—"keep our relationship out of the papers, not for myself, as I do not care, but for my niece, Natalie. Natalie is her niece also; it would hurt her, and she knows nothing about her uncle's death or—— She's in love with young Middleton; they are engaged; it would—— You understand?"

"Perfectly," said Donovan, and he gave the old man his hand. "This shall be kept a secret on the condition that all these clever devices of yours are destroyed at once."

"I have already demolished them," replied the other.

They sent Mrs. Lawrence to Matteawan, having proven beyond a doubt that the woman was a maniac, with the two mysterious murders laid at her door.

Little Natalie never knew that her beloved uncle had ever met the woman, let alone that she was a relative, and when a few months later she was married to young Middleton she wondered at the old man's almost thankfulness to see her become a wife.

Summerly recovered from his wounds, which were not serious, but in gratitude to Donovan and Tom Steele for saving his life he gave them each a marvelous diamond. Tom immediately had his set in platinum for his wife as compensation for the many hours he had been forced to spend away from her.

The Flying Auto

by W. W. Hatfield

IN the gray of the early twilight the old Ludwig homestead towered amidst its unkempt surroundings like a sinister fortress of the powers of evil. Its windows were heavily barred; its weatherboarding warped and blackened and crumbling in decay; its outbuildings sunken in a state of desolate disrepair. The grounds were a jungle, overrun by brambles and thorned shrubbery, choked with weeds and poisonous creepers, infested with venomous, obscene things that crawled slimily through the depths of vegetation. Over the very door of the deserted mansion grew the trunk of a great vine, whose gnarled, twisted branches extended like the arms of a demon on guard over its master's hall.

Behind one of the rank, untrimmed hedges two men crouched. One, a tall, spare man with graying hair and gray, piercing eyes set deep under bushy brows, was Inspector Henry Crawford, of the East National Bank. The other was Sergeant Dan Mulcahy, of the Chicago Police Department, a behemothic man whose face, shoulders and toes might have been built with a carpenter's square. Both were dressed in dark, inconspicuous clothes.

From time to time Mulcahy shifted his position wearily. The inaction, the long hours of unrewarded watching, irked. The atmosphere was beginning to get on his nerves. A blacksnake glided through the hedge, and the big man shivered.

"This place gives me the creeps," he complained. "There's something quare about it."

"Probably the ghost," suggested Crawford with a smile. "Do you remember when old Rudolf Ludwig was murdered here, twenty years ago?"

"I do not," answered Mulcahy, "but I've heard the story. "'Twas his own son that did it, they tell me."

"The boy was acquitted," said Crawford. "Insufficient evidence. The chances are that he was guilty. He had a bad reputation. Feeling was strong against him here. He would probably have been lynched if he had come back to the old place."

"What became of him?" asked Mulcahy.

"Left the country altogether. Later he got to be a professor in some college in Europe. He had a scientific bent. At home, I remember, he was always dabbling with some experiment that took money by the barrel, till old Rudolf finally refused to let him have any more."

"So he murdered the ould man and took it," supplemented Mulcahy. "A foine bit

of a lad, sure. Do you think he had something to do with the robbery at the East National?"

"So far as I know," answered Crawford, shaking his head, "he has never come back. It's not Adolf Ludwig I suspect so much as it is the queer stories they tell about his place. Of course the place is supposed to be haunted, and the farmers around here are probably superstitious, but this ghost is peculiar. I first heard about it from an old farmer who is one of our heaviest depositors, and claims to have seen it with his own eyes. It is an automobile—a long gray automobile that flies in the air and comes to roost in old Ludwig's barnyard in the dead of night."

"'Tis a foine brand of hootch they make in this country," commented Mulcahy sarcastically.

"Possibly," said Crawford, "but I'm inclined to think that there's something more than delirium tremens in the story. The watchman at the bank made a statement that the robber escaped in a long gray automobile that rose straight into the air. Of course he may have been delirious at the time. He died a few minutes later from his wounds."

"Listen," whispered Mulcahy sharply.

The roar of a starting motor came to their ears. Almost instantly it was throttled down into a steady, musical hum. A door opened in one of the dilapidated sheds. A long gray automobile emerged. Purring softly, powerfully, like a giant gray cat, it rolled toward them through the weed-choked trail that ran on the opposite side of the hedge.

Something about the slouched figure behind the wheel suggested the crawling, venomous things of the jungle. He was undersized. His eyes were beady, darting. His face was saturnine, evil. His thin, compressed lips might have covered a forked tongue. A satanic emanation, a stream of repellent magnetism seemed to flow from him. Mulcahy shivered as the car crept past. Crawford got cautiously to his feet.

"That," he whispered, as the gray car turned into the highroad and glided away, "was Adolf Ludwig."

"It was the divil himself," asserted Mulcahy with conviction and another shiver.

Following the hedge, they presently came out upon the road, a narrow dirt pike, bordered on the opposite side by a thicket. A hundred yards away a broken-down rail fence gave ingress to this thicket, where Crawford's car, a red, speedy roadster, was hidden snugly behind a clump of shrubbery. Crawford settled himself behind the wheel and started the motor.

"I'm going to follow Ludwig," he announced.

Mulcahy clambered in beside him, and the red roadster leaped after the fast-receding tail light of the gray car.

The old Ludwig estate lay within a few miles of the straggling outskirts of Chicago. Already the lights of the city were visible. Within half a mile the country road merged into a paved street. The two cars sped through the outlying districts practically alone, for it was early spring and the traffic not yet heavy. Fifteen minutes brought them to the heart of the residential district. Their course now lay along South Shore Drive. They passed the Country Club, came out upon the lake front, and plunged into Jackson Park. Here the gray car swerved from the main drive and, following the lake front, ran down to the old Spanish Mission, a dilapidated relic of the Columbian Exposition, standing, gaunt and abandoned, on a rocky promontory that juts out into the lake. It was a deserted point, for the raw lake breeze attacked it unmercifully.

Crawford stopped in the shadow of an overhanging tree and turned off his lights.

"Blind drive," he said quietly. "He'll have to come out the way he went in."

"Or fly," grunted Mulcahy.

They relapsed into silence, listening to the slap of the waves on the beach and the rattle of loose clapboards as the wind tore at the old mission building. The gray car was plainly visible from where they sat, though its driver, still slouched behind the wheel, seemed unaware that he was being watched.

Presently Mulcahy gripped Crawford's arm.

"Look," he whispered.

A young woman, muffled in a long, dark cloak and carrying a small, black handbag, slipped from amongst the trees. She approached the gray car timidly, and after a moment's hesitation climbed into the tonneau. A few words, evidently angry, although so low as to be indistinguishable, passed between her and the driver. While they talked the wheels of the gray car left the ground. The machine rose into the air with an almost imperceptible motion, as if lifted slowly by a powerful, unseen force.

Crawford and Mulcahy sat immobile, gripped by sheer astonishment. The girl herself seemed unaware of the upward movement until the gray car had become a silhouette against the roof of the old building. Then she sprang to her feet with a sharp cry of alarm. Placing one foot upon the door of the tonneau, she attempted to leap, but was pulled back by the driver. There was a short struggle, in which her handbag slipped from her wrist and dropped to the pavement. The gray car shot into the air with an incredible burst of speed. It became a speck in the sky, which faded away like an ascending rocket, while the girl's screams still rang on the air.

Crawford was the first to recover the faculty of speech.

"An unexpected denouement," he commented dryly. "What do you think of your delirium tremens ghost now, Mulcahy?"

"'Tis the divil himself," asserted Mulcahy.

"It looks as though Ludwig has added abduction to murder and bank robbery," said Crawford. "Let's see what's in that purse she dropped."

In the light of the dash lamp they examined the contents of the black handbag which had fallen from the girl's wrist. There was a dainty handkerchief, embroidered with the initials "M. S.," a collection of small change, chewing-gum, hairpins and other trinkets peculiar to feminine purses, and lastly a letter, which Crawford opened.

It was a short, masculine scrawl, addressed to Miss Marion Stammert, and ran:

"If you value your father's life meet me at the old Spanish Mission at nine this evening. Otherwise you may expect his death before midnight.—A. L."

Crawford handed the letter to Mulcahy.

"Marion Stammert," he said, "is the daughter of Professor Thomas Stammert, one of our depositors. He is a retired scientist. Spends a great deal of his time in Europe. Probably was associated with Ludwig there."

"Suppose we pay him a visit," suggested Mulcahy, inspecting the address on the envelope. "The chances are that Ludwig is taking the girl to the old house. We can pick up Stammert on our way out."

The residence of Professor Thomas Stammert was situated about ten blocks south of the park. He proved to be a small, bald-headed man with large eyes that had a trick of wandering dreamily off into space. To Crawford, whom he knew slightly, he granted a nod. Mulcahy's introduction he acknowledged with a listless handshake.

As Crawford rapidly sketched the incidents of the evening, however, the little man's large eyes seemed to contract, taking on a fiery intensity that changed his aspect of mild abstraction to one of absolute ferocity. He glanced hastily over the letter which had been found in his daughter's purse, crumpled it in his hand, and reached for his hat.

"There is not a moment to lose," he said quietly. "Ludwig is a man absolutely devoid of conscience. Marion knew that he had threatened me. She was afraid. She did not show me this letter."

"Are you armed?" asked Crawford as the three crowded into the seat of the roadster.

"With knowledge," answered Stammert. "In thirty minutes, if my plans work out, Adolf Ludwig will be neither in this world nor in any other."

Few men of small stature have the faculty of being impressive. Professor Stammert achieved it by his tone, which was as hard and cold and sharp as frozen steel. There was no bravado in the threat, only a savage forcefulness that caused even Mul-

cahy, the behemothic, to look upon the little man with a new respect.

For upwards of ten minutes they sped southward in silence. Crawford was the first to speak.

"Why did Ludwig threaten you?" he asked.

"Because," replied Stammert, "I refused to join him in a certain enterprise in which he needed a confederate. In addition I threatened to expose the affair to the police."

"And what was this enterprise?"

"A sort of piracy," Stammert continued. "With the aid of his flying auto Ludwig planned to carry out a series of bank robberies which, if success ul, would make him immensely wealthy. He intended to use the old Ludwig homestead as a base temporarily for his operations. The fact that it was popularly supposed to be haunted would be an aid in diverting suspicion if the machine should be seen."

"He had a permanent location in view, then," suggested Crawford.

"His ultimate purpose," answered Stammert, "was to establish himself on an island, probably in the South Seas, where he could live in luxury and continue his marauding expeditions in comparative safety. The man has an insatiate thirst for wealth and power. If his plans should succeed he would become a menace to civilization. And he has the ability to make them succeed. He is the most brilliant scientist I have ever known."

"Where did you become acquainted?"

"I first met him in Europe. We carried out some experiments there together. At that time I was not familiar with his history. I do not know yet whether it is true that he murdered his father for the money to complete his education, but I can assure you that he is quite capable of such a thing."

"Can you explain the phenomenon of the flying auto?" asked Crawford.

"The principle," returned Stammert, "is simple. Scientists have long suspected that a substance existed which had the property of repelling, or of being repelled by, the earth. Some years ago it was my good fortune to discover this substance. The force generated by it is so powerful that a very small quantity is capable of lifting a very heavy object, such as, for instance, an automobile. In time it will revolutionize modern flying. But I have been unable to devise an absolutely safe method of controlling it, and it was my intention to keep the discovery a secret until I had perfected it. When my airships go up I want to be sure they are coming down."

"How did Ludwig obtain his knowledge of this substance?" inquired Crawford.

"He had access to my laboratory during our experiments, and appropriated my discovery for his own purposes. By its aid he constructed the flying auto. I warned him that his course was not only dishonest, but dangerous. At which, of course, he laughed. Ludwig has the characteristics of the devil. He knows neither fear nor conscience."

"There is danger then of his machine falling?"

"Not of falling, but of failing to fall. The destruction of a single element would render it absolutely impossible to bring it down to earth again. It would go whirling through space or eternity, repelled by the earth, by the stars, by everything. The force is, in fact, the opposite of gravity."

"An appropriate end for Ludwig," observed Crawford dryly.

"Highly," agreed Stammert. "Also, it would be an effective end to this insane scheme, which, I assure you, he is quite capable of carrying out. He has already struck the first blow."

"The second," corrected Crawford. "The first blow was struck last night, when he cut through the vault of the East National Bank and got away with a quarter of a million in currency. Incidentally he mortally wounded the watchman, who died today. Ludwig is wanted for murder."

The lights of the city had been left behind. Crawford turned into the country road and snapped out his lights. A quarter of a mile away they parked the car at the side of the road and concluded the journey on foot. Like shadows, they flitted silently along under cover of the dense

hedgerows, passed their hiding-place of the afternoon, and presently merged into the denser shadow of the great house itself.

No light came from the heavily barred windows. Except for the occasional chirp of a cricket, or the deep, sepulchral croak of a bullfrog in the dank grounds, there were no sounds of life. Yet the heavy door behind the demon-shaped vine stood slightly ajar, and before it, half buried in the riotous weeds that choked the ancient driveway, stood the gray car.

They wriggled through the weeds Indian fashion until they had gained the side of the car. Stammert twisted the lock from a tool-box on the running board. Methodically, like an expert mechanician going about a particular piece of repairing, he selected a wrench, lifted the floor board under the driver's seat, and set to work.

In a moment there was a blinding flash. Stammert hastily replaced the floor board.

"The flying auto is done for," he announced grimly. "Now for Ludwig."

But the flash had evidently been observed from within the house. A light step sounded. The crack in the door became wider. A saturnine, evil face was framed in it. Beady, darting eyes searched the shadows.

Stammert, swinging his wrench viciously, sprang at the door. The blow missed its elusive mark, but the impetus of his rush swung the door wide open. The little professor, without a second of hesitation, plunged into the darkness of the house.

Leaving Mulcahy on guard at the door, Crawford drew his automatic and followed. His flashlight showed him a long, heavily carpeted hall, at one side of which a broad stairway, also heavily carpeted, led to the second floor. Neither Stammert nor Ludwig was in sight, and the heavy carpet had deadened the sound of their footsteps. Crawford stood for a moment irresolute.

Presently from the second floor came the sounds of a struggle, a crash as of overturned articles of furniture, the jangle of broken glass, and, above them all, the screams of a terrified woman. Crawford sprang up the stairs three at a time.

At the top landing he was enveloped in a cloud of smoke. Little tongues of flame, issuing from the open door of a rear room, were already lapping hungrily at the dry, rotting woodwork. Crashing blows, mingled with the screams of the woman, indicated that a violent struggle was still in progress.

Plunging through the smoke, Crawford burst into the room, which had become a raging furnace, and in the midst of which Stammert and Ludwig, torn, scratched, bleeding, were fighting with the fury of wildcats. Their struggles had overturned a table on which a small oil lamp had burned. Blazing oil, in contact with furnishings and woodwork which age has turned to tinder, has almost as much rapidity of action as a match applied to a train of gunpowder. A second later would have been a second too late. For there, bound tightly to a chair, with the flames reaching hungrily toward her, was Marion Stammert.

Crawford slashed the bonds from the girl, gathered her in his arms, and staggered toward the door.

At that instant Ludwig landed a stunning blow on his opponent and leaped from the room. The heavy door swung shut behind him. The key grated in the lock. They were prisoners.

Miss Stammert had fainted. Her father was unconscious from the blow. The heavy door resisted Crawford's frenzied attack. He turned frantically to the window, smashing the glass with his elbow. Stout iron bars, set close in the stone casing, confronted him here. From the other side of the locked door came a mocking, sinister laugh.

Crawford fumbled for his police whistle and blew one shrill, despairing blast. Then, overcome by the heat and the strangling smoke, he lost consciousness. His last act was a futile effort to smother a little serpent of fire that had crept into Marion Stammert's flowing hair.

He came back to consciousness with the rush of clear, cool air in his face and the booming voice of Dan Mulcahy in his ears. The big policeman was checking over the contents of a black traveling bag crammed with packages of currency and canvas sacks

bearing the name of the East National Bank.

"The money is all here, Crawford," he announced, "and the girl is safe, barring a bit of a hair singe."

Near by stood Professor Stammert and his daughter, arm in arm. They were gazing absorbedly into the air. The old Ludwig homestead, wrapped in flames, lighted the scene weirdly.

"Where's Ludwig?" demanded Crawford.

"The divil got away," confessed Mulcahy reluctantly. "When I heard your whistle I left the door and run up the stairs. I saw the smoke and the locked door and guessed the rest. I carried the three of yez out into the air, and then went back after Ludwig. I got this bag, but the greasy divil managed to slip out of my fingers and into that flyin' auto. He was up in the air like a shot before I could draw a bead on him."

"Stammert," said Crawford accusatively, "I thought you told me the flying auto was done for?"

"Eh?" answered the little professor absently. His eyes, which had grown large and round again, had returned to their trick of wandering dreamily off into space.

"I thought," repeated Crawford, "that you had done for the flying auto."

"Undoubtedly," said Stammert, in a matter-of-fact voice. "I destroyed the controlling element. Adolf Ludwig"—he pointed upward, where a tiny black speck was fast disappearing into the clouds—"will never come back to earth. He is doomed to a perpetual voyage through space. His flying auto will be forever repelled by anything with which it may come in contact. The earth will not have him, nor the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars."

The tiny black speck in the sky faded away. The flames leaped high over the old mansion, crackling merrily. The great vine with the gnarled, twisted branches that had stood for years like a demon on guard over the door withered and shrunk in the heat. The fire leaped to the decaying outbuildings, and lapped insatiate at the dried grasses and dead timber of the grounds. The jungle itself and the crawling, venomous things that infested it were devoured. And thus the old Ludwig homestead, like its master, was wiped utterly from the face of the earth.

CONVICTS SAW CELL BARS

AN attempt on the part of three prisoners in the Burlington County jail to make a get-away was frustrated, it became known at Mt. Holly, N. J., when Warden Clarence L. Warner admitted that one of the three was Ernest L. Mayo, indicted for the murder of Jonas K. Fox, a jitney driver, on May 3 last. The other two implicated are charged with highway robbery.

The three men had succeeded, officials admitted, in partly sawing their way through the cell doors, and probably would have gained the corridor within an hour or two had not the warden discovered the plot.

Mayo occupied a cell at the far end of "murderer's row" in the jail. Directly across the corridor, separated by about thirty feet, were the cells of Frank Patrillo and John Wilhelm. In some manner, not yet known to the officials, the three men managed to get some saws.

They worked very rapidly. When the warden discovered the plot the men had succeeded in partly sawing through the steel bars of their cells. The saws were taken from them and they were immediately transferred to other cells and placed under guard.

The three planned, according to the warden, to get to the corridor, attract the attention of one of the jailors and when he opened the door leading from the corridor to overpower him and escape.

Warden Warner is making an investigation to ascertain how the saws came into the possession of the three prisoners.

Tracked by Inches

By EDWARD LEE BENNETT

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

DEANE CONFESSES

MEANWHILE Fougere, as usual, kept to the seclusion of his room. He had promised to deliver up the murderer within twenty-four hours or forfeit his reputation. As yet he had formulated no plan whereby he could fulfill his boast. He had followed his usual plan of infinitesimal observation. He was satisfied that nothing had escaped him. Yet he was unable to reach a tenable conclusion. Marion Baker's glove and the red disks had been the only clues.

Suddenly an inspiration struck him so forcibly that he literally leaped from his chair and seized the ever-ready pencil and pad of paper which he kept on his dresser. Next he did a very strange thing.

He took a small pistol from his traveling bag and extended it at arm's length until its point touched the wall. He made a small pencil-mark at the exact place of contact.

Next with a tape-measure he ascertained the height of the mark from the floor. A quick calculation on the pad brought a smile to his normally expressionless face. An observer would have gathered that Fougere had made an important discovery.

Then another red disk propelled by some mysterious force appeared under the door. Fougere moved rapidly, but the hallway was empty. For an instant he stood rather uncertainly in the doorway studying the third red disk. What was it? A threat? A challenge? Rapidly he reviewed the happenings of the day, but no solution presented itself.

Deane's room was dark. After knocking twice without receiving an answer, Fougere walked in and turned on the light. Deane lay on the bed fully dressed except for his coat. He rubbed his eyes sleepily and stretched as if he had been aroused by the detective's entrance.

"Oh, it's you, Fougere," he exclaimed. "Has anything happened?"

"Nothing particular," Fougere returned, studying the confidential secretary closely; "I took the liberty of walking in, as you didn't answer my knock. I haven't any matches, and am just dying for a smoke."

"Glad you did. Help yourself. The matches are on the dresser. I was tired and lay down for a bit. My, but time flies. I've been asleep over two hours."

"These two-hundred-watt lights are powerful affairs," the detective digressed, indicating the one which he had turned on.

Deane agreed, and after a few commonplaces Fougere left. Deane noted with surprise and suspicion that the all-important match which had apparently prompted Fougere's visit had been forgotten. It seemed to argue that he himself was the object of surveillance. Deane was annoyed and uneasy.

Fougere returned to his room to find Marie Girard making a systematic search through his effects. She was studying in evident perplexity the figures with which he had covered the writing pad.

His entry had been noiseless, and he was at her side almost before she was aware of his presence. Although considerably startled, Marie Girard regained her self-possession immediately.

"Did you find a pair of gloves in the dresser, Mr. Fougere?" she inquired inoculously. "You see, I put a pair there

some time ago while this guest room was empty, and I need them now."

She smiled sweetly. Fougere was struck by her alluring beauty. Dark, lustrous eyes, wavy black hair, a wonderful skin, and a graceful figure were but a few of her assets.

"No, I haven't found your gloves, Marie, but what made you think that you might come upon them in my suitcase?"

A telltale corner of linen protruded from the article in question.

Marie Girard laughed.

"You are too clever for me, Mr. Fougere. I may as well confess. I could not resist exploring your suitcase, as I have always wondered what detectives carried about with them—disguises and all that sort of thing, you know. But I was disappointed."

Fougere gave her one of his rare smiles. One who knew him well would have termed it a smile of appreciation.

"What do you think of the problem you have in your hand, Marie?"

She smiled back at him in naive bewilderment.

"It's really too much for me," she admitted.

A strange maid! She departed with a tantalizing smile.

Although Fougere did not anticipate that anything unusual would happen during the night, he was prepared to contend with any situation which might develop. He extinguished his lights a little after eleven o'clock and then, instead of retiring, drew a chair near the door and sat there listening.

Shortly before twelve o'clock his patience was rewarded by the sound of a furtive footstep. A door creaked somewhere and steps sounded again. Fougere slipped a revolver and flashlight into his pocket and started for the stairs. A piercing scream came from the darkness below. The detective leaped over the stair railing into the lower hall and snapped the electric light button.

The light revealed Rosemary Spenser clutching her throat with one hand and holding the other against the wall for support. Deane was standing thunderstruck just inside the library with a revolver in one hand and a sheaf of red paper in the other. Marie Girard was at his side.

Fougere covered Deane with his revolver.

"Turn on the library lights, Marie," he ordered. "And you, Deane, hand over that gun and that red paper."

Deane complied without a word. Judson, half dressed, presented a ludicrous figure with a big rusty pistol in his hand. He was followed by the housekeeper and by several of the other servants.

"What's happened?"

"Nothing much yet, Judson. Will you lock the door and give me the key? Thanks."

"Well, Deane, I've caught you with the goods. You may as well confess," the detective cried triumphantly.

It was a striking tableau. Deane hung his head and averted his eyes. Rosemary Spenser still rubbed her throat, while her glance wandered from one to the other. Judson towered over everybody, his stolid face seeming to take even this surprising denouement as a matter of course. Marie had quite recovered from her agitation, and was now perfectly composed. The other servants who had come in were dazed with fear and amazement. Fougere was master of the situation and seemed to be enjoying himself.

"This is the revolver with which Jonas Rune was killed, and this is the paper from which the red disks were cut. Isn't that so, Deane?"

Deane nodded his head in assent.

A hubbub arose outside on the piazza, which skirted one side of the library. There was scuffling and then a stentorian voice cried:

"Open in the name of the law!"

Fougere motioned to Judson, who turned the bolt, and the glass door stood open.

Inspector Rice and a policeman stalked in, half carrying, half dragging a man who struggled vainly to release himself. The inspector showed no surprise at finding such a gathering in the library. His mind was so much occupied by his prisoner that he could think of nothing else.

"Here's our murderer, Fougere," he announced dramatically.

Simultaneously a cry rang out.

"Father!"

Rosemary Spenser was at the prisoner's side.

"This man is your father?" Rice demanded in amazement.

"Yes, he is my father, and it's ridiculous to think that he killed uncle. Just as ridiculous as it is to accuse Norman Deane!"

The girl's eyes flamed and her bosom heaved. She was prepared to defend both father and lover against the world.

"Deane? What has Deane to do with it?" Rice voiced his surprise. "This man here is the one who threatened to kill Rune—the one who got away from us that night, Fougere."

"You didn't do it, did you, Norman?" Rosemary Spenser pleaded. "Say you didn't. Tell them you didn't."

But Deane still hung his head.

The doorbell rang. Everybody looked up expectantly.

Fougere tossed the key to Judson.

"Bring them in, whoever they are," he commanded.

Judson returned, followed by Marion Baker and her father.

"If you are a great detective, prove it now, Fougere," Rosemary Spenser challenged. "I cannot stand the suspense much longer. It's killing me. Find the murderer and clear father and Norman!"

Fougere tendered her a sympathetic glance.

"All in good time," he assured her. "And now, Mr. and Miss Baker, I suppose you have decided that frankness is the best course?"

Baker nodded.

"Yes," he said, "we have. Marion and I have been talking the matter over and have come to the conclusion that it is the best way. We made our decision rather hastily and thought we had better come right over here. We are tired of being trailed everywhere we go.

"I was in the neighborhood on the afternoon of the murder," he went on, "but I didn't come in the house. I felt pretty wrathy about Rune and was half-determined to approach him and demand some papers, which made things look rather bad for me. However, I didn't come in the house, as I said before, but finally went home. Tell your story to the authorities now, Marion."

"I heard father's argument with Mr. Rune," she began, "and realized that he meant to do just as he threatened—practically to ruin him. I heard him say that the papers in the case would be locked up in his safe at home—that is, here. I came over here to see what I could do. The front door wasn't locked, so I stole upstairs. Rune appeared to be asleep in his chair. I stole over to the safe, but found it locked. Then I lost my nerve, became panicstricken and fled, leaving my glove behind."

Fougere nodded. From his expression it was impossible to determine whether or not he gave full credence to the experiences which he had just heard.

"Now, what were you doing down here at this time of night, Marie?" he asked the maid.

"I saw Mr. Deane come out of the study on the afternoon of the murder. He made me promise then not to say anything about it. I didn't realize what it meant just then and I did. I knew it was my duty to tell, though, and I told him to-day I couldn't keep silence any longer. He asked me to meet him here at night where we might talk and wouldn't be disturbed. He said he would make it worth my while to keep quiet. I came just to see what he had to say."

"Is that true, Deane?"

"Not a word of it!"

The maid's eyes blazed with wrath.

"But you were in Rune's study on the afternoon of the murder, and you were caught with the incriminating articles in your hands. How do you account for that?"

"Well," Deane began, taking a great breath, "I may as well say once and for all that there never was any murder. Jonas Rune committed suicide!"

CHAPTER FIVE

FOUGERE WINS

"LET'S have your story, Deane."

"On the afternoon of the murder I was feeling much aggrieved against Mr. Rune. He had tried to break up the engagement between his niece and myself. He had even gone so far as to threaten to commit suicide to curse us if we persisted in our engagement. Rosemary—that is Miss Spenser—feared that he would do as he threatened. It preyed upon her mind and made her very nervous. Rune was a peculiar sort of person. He believed in fatalism and all sorts of pagan dogmas and had quite a collection of idols in his study. Anyhow, Miss Spenser worried over his threat until she was in a dreadful state of mind. I took a notion that I might be able to reason with him. Of course I never thought for a moment that he really meant to commit suicide just to make somebody else miserable, but I couldn't convince Miss Spenser. I left the office and came over here to have a talk with him. I found him lying dead on the floor with the pistol beside him. He had killed himself, after all. Two things rushed into my mind. First of all, I thought of Rosemary's dread of his carrying out his horrible threat, and knew that she would never feel safe in marrying me after that. Then I recollected that the business was in rather a precarious condition, and the thought struck me that the news of Rune's suicide might ruin it. His suicide would probably be attributed to financial worry. I didn't have time to consider the matter very deeply. So I acted very foolishly. I put the revolver in my pocket, and did my best to make it appear that there had been a struggle in the room."

"How about those red disks?" Rice put in.

"I'm coming to that. I was about to leave the room when it suddenly occurred to me that somebody might be blamed for the murder. I had often read stories where detectives were puzzled by some strange piece of paper or other clue. I searched around and finally found a sheaf of red paper in a bottom drawer of the desk. It had been there, I suppose, for years. I cut out a circle, pinned it to Rune's shirt, and then stole out, taking the paper and the gun with me. Of course I was careful of not leaving any fingerprints. When I heard Baker and Marion were suspected I became alarmed and slipped another red disk—I had made several for such an emergency—in a book in the library so that Fougere would get it. I wanted to keep diverting suspicion from everybody who was suspected. Of course it was an impossible task, as I soon realized, but it was too late to draw back. I went still farther by slipping another red disk under Fougere's door to-night. Later he came into my room and acted so queerly that I saw he had discovered something. I decided that it was time to get rid of the gun and paper. I was going to hide them behind some books in the library here. I came downstairs, and was just about to open the library door when Marie took hold of me and pulled me in. I didn't make any noise, because I couldn't afford to risk getting caught. That's about all. I'm sorry I messed up things the way I did."

Rosemary gave him a grateful glance. Evidently the relief of knowing that both he and her father were innocent relieved her even of the superstitious apprehension which she might otherwise have had in connection with the manner of her uncle's death.

"Is he telling the truth, and do we have to admit that he's been stringing us all the time?"

Rice was plainly disappointed in having a sensational murder dwindle into a suicide with a few unusual touches. The police would reap a goodly share of ridicule.

"Practically everything is clear," Fougere intoned as if speaking to himself. "However, there are still a few loose threads. Will you please tell us what you know, Miss Spenser?"

"About my father? Well, uncle was connected with father in a business way years ago and had poor father sent to prison for some crooked work which he had done himself. It's a long story. But, anyhow, father met me on the street when he came

out of prison and told me all about it. Both of us were trying to get papers which would clear father. I knew that uncle kept them in his safe. Father got impatient. At first I thought he might have shot uncle in a rage, but he denied it, and now of course it's all right. And to-night I came down here to get my necklace. I heard footsteps and slipped into the hall closet. Somebody seized me by the throat. Things were getting dark and I just managed to scream."

"It's easy to imagine anything like that when one is excited and frightened," Fougere told her with a tantalizing smile.

The girl was indignant.

"Imagine? Why, my throat still hurts, and I'm sure it is bruised on the outside."

"And then there's the discrepancy between Deane's statement and Marie's. How about it, Marie?"

"Whatever Mr. Deane may say to the contrary I told the truth."

"Hm! Well, it's getting late, and we must make haste. Rune was murdered, Rice. The path the bullet took proves that beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"We're worse off than ever," Rice declared impatiently. "If he committed suicide things would be pretty clear. But if he was murdered as you say, who murdered him?"

"The murderer is in the room!"

Had the ceiling fallen the reaction would not have been greater. The silence became oppressive. Suddenly the light went out, and for a moment there was pandemonium. When they were switched on again Marie Girard was missing, and Fougere was completing his task of shackling the giant Judson.

"You cursed devil," Judson snarled, exhibiting a malevolence of which no one would ever have suspected him, "I knew you'd get me. Yes, I killed old Rune. You'll find out all about it if you don't know already. Marie and I were blackmailing him for a little money. He cornered me and was going to send me to jail. I didn't mean to shoot, but he goaded me to it."

Rice consigned the prisoner to the two policemen, who took him away. The inspector offered his hand to Fougere.

"How did you know?" he inquired in amazement.

Fougere smiled. He was well pleased with himself. He had promised to hand the murderer over to justice within twenty-four hours, and he had fulfilled his boast with time to spare. His green eyes gleamed beneath his shaggy brows, and he drew himself up to his full height. He had a highly appreciative audience.

"Oh, it wasn't hard," he explained. "In the first place, I knew that there were some peculiar features about the case. The vases and clock in the study furnished food for thought. The vases had been broken, not by a fall, but by being struck with some instrument. The clock had been stopped by jamming the works. You see, the fragments of the vases would naturally have scattered. But we found them in two piles."

"But where does Judson come in?"

"I'm coming to that. Deane had been acting suspiciously, and I was satisfied that he knew more than he was telling, as well as Miss Spenser. As to Judson, I just tracked him by inches."

"Is that a fact?"

"Yes. You remember that the bullet went through Rune's forehead in a most remarkable way—straight through in a plane path without deviation."

"Yes."

"I wasn't impressed especially with that feature at first, but I kept it in mind. It's a habit I have, you know, to note any unusual feature, no matter how irrelevant it may seem. I finally concluded that the murderer must have fired with his arm extended straight from the shoulder. Otherwise the gun would have been deflected in an upward direction. Do you get the point?"

"Perfectly. But who else would have thought of it?"

"I experimented in my own case and found that, although I am nearly six feet tall, that I would not have been able to send a bullet through the forehead of a man of Rune's height, as the murderer did. Of

course I had Rune's measurements, including the distance from the floor of the path of the bullet. Figuring from my experiments with myself, I arrived at the deduction that the murderer was six feet and two inches in height. I had already noticed Judson's unusual stature and had asked him just how tall he was. It was easy, as you see."

"Fougere, you are a marvel," Rice explained. "Tracked by inches, it's wonderful!"

The others joined in praising the detective.

"Just one word more if you have the patience to listen to me at this hour of the night, or rather morning," Fougere went on. "What little success I have had in investigating work has been the result not of extraordinary powers, but of simply observing unusual features. The features in this case were: first, the extraordinary path of the bullet, and, second, Judson's height. I simply put the two together and the mystery was solved."

Rosemary approached him almost timidly.

"I'm so sorry for my rudeness, Mr. Fougere," she said contritely, "but, you see, I couldn't appreciate genius. I had never been so near to it before. I never can thank you enough for what you've done for us. Only for you father or Norman might have been convicted."

Before Fougere could reply she flashed a look at Deane and asked:

"May I, Norman?"

He nodded his head vigorously.

She threw her arms around the detective's neck and kissed him.

"This is most unusual," he protested smilingly.

"It is the unusual features that count, as you just told me," she assured him.

And everybody laughed.

(*The End.*)

A NEW SERIAL

Begins in our next number. Be sure to read

"THE GORILLA"

By KATHERINE STAGG

BEATING SLOT MACHINES

"YOU would be surprised," said the telephone man, "to see the amount and variety of junk sorted from the nickel-in-the-slot machine telephones in New York city every month.

"Recently we had two small barrels of assorted coins, slugs and other things. There are various foreign coins, such as German 2 1-2 pfennig pieces. They may be about the size of a nickel, but are of considerable less value. On the other hand, an occasional gold coin glistens forth from the dingy pile of iron and copper.

"Probably you know," continued the telephone man, "that some rural districts are equipped with what are known as farmer lines, that is a local service. Farmers are not noted for the great amount of ready cash they carry about with them; furthermore, it is inconvenient for persons in isolated districts to be always supplied with change. So arrangement is made with some local merchant who acts as a banker. He sells the farmer slugs which are the size and shape of a five-cent piece. Now it must be that a lot of men are drifting in from the towns every day and fetching along pocketfuls of these iron slugs, for we are constantly finding them.

"There is another interesting phase about this petty form of dishonesty. Of course you know that New York is a gum-chewing town, and probably the habit has its mental effect, especially on the young. It isn't at all likely that a boy could chew gum all the way from the Bronx to the Battery every day and even up to lunch time without thinking after a while of something else to do with the gum. We sometimes find two pennies stuck together with chewing-gum and sometimes a wad of gum sandwiched between two pieces of tin.

Detective Mooney—Strategist

by Joe Burke

EVERY plain-clothesman in police headquarters and many of the city's uniformed force were aware of the ardent love that Dave Sawyer had for his wife.

Dave was not the tall, curly-haired Adonis who usually plays the prominent part in fiction. He was squatty, nearly bald, and any one would be taking a hazardous chance to slip the knowledge to a bulldog that it had a face like Dave's.

And, again, Dave didn't use the Stock Exchange floor to rake in the coin. He just went abroad after twilight, and mussed up some one's perfectly good safe. He was a cracksman, and a dexterous one at that. But the only drawback in his nefarious "profession" was that his style of working was as plain as though he had left his card.

A few of the gold-braid rank also remembered the romance between Nora Dailey, now Dave's wife, and Detective Tom Mooney. Nora was a product of the old sod, a budding lass, vivacious and alluring. Dave's meeting with her added a touch of drama to their love affair. Tom was going home one night, when his attention was arrested by a woman's scream coming from the inside of a passing taxi. Commandeering a passing automobile, he gave chase and overhauled and took in custody a crimp who was attempting to forcibly abduct her.

It was rumored that the date for the wedding was set when, like a bolt from the starlit heavens, she and Dave Sawyer were married by Calvin Scraggs, a mouthpiece for the habitués of the underworld.

Detective Mooney, somewhat stunned at her capricious action and unaware of her clandestine intrigue with the cracksman, was inclined to feel optimistic at what he termed his narrow escape. He felt no animosity towards the girl, as it was her life, and she could live it as she saw fit.

Detective Tom Mooney was native born. He was a well-built man with the strength of a panther, perhaps thirty or thereabout, his face bronzed by a life spent much in the open. His sleek black hair was brushed back and innocent of parting, his eyes startling gray against his swarthiness, and cold despite the smile which lurked in them as they regarded friend or foe.

The mutual love between that mismated pair never waned in their five years of married life. Of course Dave was absent for indefinite periods, the county demanding his services. Then the green-eyed monster encroached on their happiness. The crook on his return from his compulsory sojourn

would accuse her of every sin on the calendar, and the result was stormy scenes and heartaches. Thus we find their domestic affairs at the beginning of our narrative affiliated with the usurper—jealousy.

"The North End branch of the Marketmen's Trust was looted last night!"

That was the startling announcement that greeted the detective force at rollcall one morning in early December.

Not a man batted an eyelid. That wasn't their nature; they were immune from wonder at unexpected happenings.

"Yes," went on Chief Mullaly, "they blackjacked the watchman, cut all communication wires and worked on the vault at their leisure. They used the 'soup,' and knew how to use it. You, Mooney—you and Sullivan had better run down there and look things over."

The two headquarters detectives found the robbed bank in a turmoil when they arrived there ten minutes later. Consternation was imprinted on the sea of faces present, even to the office boy. A hurried examination of the twisted and marred steel vault door disclosed plainly to the detectives that it was the work of professionals. They had used nitroglycerine, and plenty of it. An inventory of the contents also indicated the stamp of the looters. Paper currency to the amount of one hundred thousand dollars and all negotiable bonds were taken; silver and all the unnegotiable bonds were not disturbed.

The watchman, much better, was still a little dazed, and told an incoherent story of how he was attacked when he answered a cry for help outside the rear door. He realized, when it was too late, that he was the victim of a ruse. No fresh fingerprints were available, and that indicated that the cracksman wore gloves.

"Not a clue in sight, chief," Detective Mooney was telling the old man on his return from an investigation. "There were two of them, no doubt, and they did a slick job. There are only two men in this state who could pull off a job like that. One is Squint Nelson, but he's over in Charlestown jail and has two years to go. The other is, you know as well as I do, chief, that d—— rat, Dave Sawyer!"

Chief Mullaly sprang erect, upsetting his chair with a crash.

"That's the bird!" he declared triumphantly. "You take the case, Mooney; look him up."

The detective raised his hand in protest. The chief frowned and glared at his subordinate.

"Excuse me, chief, but, as man to man, might I suggest that you assign some other officer on the case? It's not for any sentimental reasons that I seek to be excused from this particular job, but don't you think, chief, that some other fellow could do better?"

The grizzled old chief of the "Hub's" plain-clothes squad righted his chair and lowered himself into it. His frown was still evident, although his eyes were soft and thoughtful. After several minutes' deliberation he looked up at the young detective.

"No, Mooney," he announced reflectively. "I've threshed the whole thing out in my mind, and you're the man that's got to get after that yegg. You know what a slippery bird he is. Find out if he's at home and can't prove an alibi. You've got to use your bean, a little strategy, or he'll slip through with the spoils. I'm sorry, Mooney, but duty is duty, and you're the right man in the right place. Go to it with my best wishes."

Nora Sawyer, née Dailey, was seated in the living-room of her cozy little kitchenette apartment the afternoon of that same day. A close observer would note that, although seemingly engrossed in crocheting, her fingers trembled, dropping a number of stitches, and her eyes would occasionally sweep the room furtively. Presently with a smothered cry she sprang to her feet, her work basket falling to the floor with a jingle of scissors and thimble and the rolling of spools. A loud knock had sounded on the door!

The knock was repeated, this time with more force, and the knob was turned alternately. Pulling herself together, Nora strode to the door, unlocked it and drew it

open gingerly, then staggered back. Confronting her, his gray eyes frigid and a smile on his visage, was Detective Tom Mooney!

"Hello, Nora," he greeted affably, stepping into the room. "Dave home?"

He had not removed his hat, and his hands were still thrust deep into his topcoat pocket. He hardly noticed the cracksman's wife, who was trying to frame an answer for his query.

"Dave?" she breathed. "Ah, no; he's went to Springfield this morning to look up a job. You know," she ran on, growing hot and cold by turns as the detective had backed against the wall and was smiling down at her, "Dave's going straight now, if you guys will give him a chance. That's gospel, Tom."

Her eyes dropped under the detective's searching scrutiny. She walked to the table and sank into a chair.

"Won't you sit down?" she invited.

Mooney shook his head.

"I look better standing," he fenced. "Where was Dave last night, and when did you see Silk Hoffman? Come on, now. I want an answer."

A foul epithet sprang to her tongue, her face twitched with passion. She bit her lips as she forced a reply.

"Dave was at home all night," she flung at Mooney with a flash of defiance. "And as for Silk Hoffman, *we* haven't seen him for weeks.

Mooney knew better, but that was part of his play. He had learned before calling on Nora that Dave was seen in Dago Frank's poolroom at nine o'clock the night of the robbery. He had been also apprised that Silk Hoffman was in town. The detective knew that Sawyer, Hoffman and Squint Nelson, now doing a stretch in State's prison, were a well-known trio of cracksmen. With Squint in prison and Hoffman in the city, the job at the trust company pointed suspiciously to Sawyer and the last-named crook.

The detective did not bother to search the little flat; he knew the cracksman's wife, and felt certain that if Dave Sawyer was one of the pair who did the job, he wouldn't take a chance of being arrested on suspicion. There was too much money involved to run any risks. He would keep under cover until the hue and cry quieted down, and then make a break for some foreign port. Nora, of course, would follow later. The thread-worn slogan of the department, "shadow the woman," was still good logic, but not in this case. Nora was well versed in the traits and methods of the detective force. An odd twinkle shone in his gray eyes as he turned to the door. A placard tacked on a telegraph pole outside the window had aroused an idea.

"Going to the Ward Committee's ball tonight, Nora?" the detective inquired easily. His indifference was well simulated as he swung open the door. "You were a swell dancer at one time. Do you remember when you and I won the first prize at the policemen's ball?"

Nora eyed the stalwart officer narrowly. If her thoughts were retrospecting on reminiscences of those days, she did not show it.

"No," she answered shortly, "I'm not going to any dance."

She ignored his last question and waited tensely for him to go.

"Good-night!" Mooney closed the door, and his footfalls could be heard going down the short flight of stairs. Then the front door banged and she was alone.

"D—— snake!" Nora cried out with vehemence as she began pacing the room like a caged beast. "Any one but him! Oh, that devilish smile of his! How I'd like to bury my fingernails in his face and spoil it! Gawd! If they get Dave this time they'll send him up for keeps, and they may do it with Tom Mooney after him!"

"Heads up!" was the warning that startled a group of men who were seated around a table conversing in low tones. "Here comes Mooney!" A burst of merriment and counter-jesting supplanted their mysterious whispering as the detective pushed open the door of Dago Frank's poolroom.

"Hello, Mr. Mooney," greeted Frank

smilingly. He came from behind the cigar-case with his hand extended.

"Hello, Frank," returned the detective as he shook the proffered hand. The usual topics followed: the past election, a coming prize fight and the weather. Conversation began to lag when the detective asked casually:

"Going to glide the timbers to-night, Frank, at the ward twirl?"

"Sure, Mr. Mooney," the dive-keeper declared readily. "Lotsa nice girls will be there. "You going, Mr. Mooney?" His swarthy face wrinkled up in a native smile, his polished ivories bared to the gums.

"Yes, Frank," smiled Mooney. He nudged him knowingly and winked significantly. "And, believe me, bo, I'm gona spread out some, I'll tell the world. You know," he whispered, "when the cat's away and all that sort of thing. What!"

Dago Frank, not being a law violator in the open, but having a weakness for any easy money that would fill his coffers from that source, was elated at the seeming familiarity and confidence that the noted sleuth had favored him with.

"Ah, she's th' lucky girl, Mr. Mooney," he fawned at the officer. "Puta me wise t' th' lady. She married?"

"Sure. Nothing else, Frank. An old flame of mine. Get me?"

"You mean Dave's——" he ventured.

"Sh-s-s-s," the detective sibilated. "Sure. Dave's gone to Springfield. Mum's the word, Frank. So long, I'll see you to-night."

Detective Mooney had hardly put both feet on the sidewalk when Dago Frank raised his voice in deprecation.

"God help her when Dave finds it out!"

For the next ten minutes the poolroom was not unlike a beehive. The word "mum" meant nothing to the poolroom owner, especially coming from a headquarters man. A figure arose from a chair in the corner and shuffled to the cigar counter.

"Gimme a bunch o' smokes," he ordered. His nose was twitching spasmodically, and the contracted pupils of his eyes evinced his weakness for narcotics.

"Going down th' line?" Frank whispered from the corner of his mouth, passing a small package over the counter. Then their two hands clasped and the purchaser departed. Dago Frank glanced at a crisp bill he was holding in his hand.

Detective Mooney grinned behind a dirty light of glass in a doorway across the street from the poolroom.

"There goes Snuffy Clark," he chuckled. "My plan is working."

The editor of the Boston *Times* sniveled around in his chair and grunted a salutation to Mooney.

"What's on your chest, Tom? Anything wrong in our write-up about the big steal?"

"No, Lanford; I want you to do me a favor."

"How much do you want? I'll give you an order on the cashier. How much——"

"Forget it," the detective interjected with a laugh. "Just lend me your ear for a few seconds."

"Of course you know, Tom, that it isn't regular," the editor told Mooney soberly when he had heard his request. "But my aim is always to help the police department, and seeing that there can be no come-back, I'll put it through. Beat it now, Tom; I'm as busy as blazes. Good-by."

The ball that night was a big success. The élite of the underworld and law-abiding toilers as well were represented there. The daily paper the following day gave it a whole column on the front page, with lithographic pictures of a few of the political ward bosses.

There was one that did not heed the cry of the juvenile news venders. That was Nora Sawyer. All day long and far into the night she paced the floor, starting and paling at every sound. At midnight she flung herself on the bed, but sleep eluded her. In the darkened room she lay staring into the shadows.

How long she lay thus she could not say, when suddenly she was brought up standing and trembling beside the bed by the noise of a key turning in the lock of the front door of her tiny apartment. Nora was no coward, and her life among the associates of her husband had taught her cau-

tion and the means of defence. Without making a light she gingerly took a small automatic revolver from the drawer of a dresser. Then gliding softly to the portiere that hung across the door frame that separated the living-room from the kitchen, she drew them apart and snapped on the switch, flooding the room with light.

"Hold on there!" she ordered crisply, without a tremor in her voice. As her blinking vision cleared she uttered a smothered cry and the revolver fell to the floor.

"Dave!" she gasped. Then she started towards him with arms outstretched. As she neared the crook she stopped and shrank back. He was white to the lips, his face distorted with rage and his eyes erupting the murder that was in his heart.

"Dave, for God's sake, what's the matter?" Nora cried in terror as she backed to the wall. "You frighten me, Dave; tell me——"

"You know what's th' matter," he snarled.

He was advancing towards her, his shoulders hunched, his hands doubled up; then he seized her wrist roughly.

"You're hurting me, Dave," she whined pitifully. The cracksman had reached her side and was twisting her arm. "Oh, Dave, boy, tell me what—I've—done. Oh!" she moaned as she sank to the floor.

Dave Sawyer towered over the inert form at his feet, his square jaws working, his rage subsiding.

"Get up!" he ordered hoarsely. "You're gona tell me th' truth, or, so help me, I'll croak yer if I go ter ther chair!"

Nora arose painfully to her feet. Her husband was now holding before her tear-dimmed eyes a newspaper that he had taken from his pocket.

"Read that!" he roared, pointing with a stubby forefinger to a paragraph that was marked out with a lead-pencil in a column on the front page.

Brushing her tears away with the back of her hand, Nora read the encircled paragraph at the bottom of the write-up about the ward committee's ball the night before.

During intermission a special feature not down on the program won applause from the attendance. That was the superb dancing of Thomas Mooney, the Nemesis of the underworld, and Nora Sawyer, the wife of Dave Sawyer, the notorious safe expert. The detective's lady partner was at one time engaged to be married to Mooney. In the past they had won several prizes with their dexterous feet on the waxed boards.

Nora crushed the paper in her hand and dashed it to the floor, her eyes aflame like one dancing on the rim of madness.

"It's a lie, Dave, a lie! My God!" she gasped at a sudden thought. Her face was marble-like now as she stared wildly towards the door. "It's a plant, Dave! A plant! Don't you understand?"

She grasped his arm, and was now dragging him to the window. The feminine intuition had cleaved through the mist of reason, and she now scented the danger to her mate.

"Leggo me!" snarled the cracksman. "Don't try no movie stuff on me. Dago Frank sent Snuffy Clark t' tell me that cursed bull was in his poolroom shootin' off his face t' him 'bout it. Tell me t' truth, or you'll never live t' help me spend that ten thou'!"

"Oh, Dave, won't you believe me? I never left this house for two days. Mrs. Pike was talking to me in this very room at ten o'clock last night. She was telling me that she was going to raise the rent. Do believe me, Dave, won't you? Let's make haste and beat it to-night. Do, Dave; I'm afraid."

The cracksman eyed her coldly, but with a maelstrom of emotion surging beneath his coldness. A plant! She had called it a plant, and he realized the magnitude of it. At this moment the house was probably surrounded by the minions of the law, their guns drawn, waiting to shoot him down. But that was secondary in his mind now. His principal thought was the only thing he ever loved, telling the truth—the woman whom he had placed on a pedestal and worshiped, the woman whom he had credited with being white and on the level. His face softened as he took her trembling hands in his. His eyes were tender. She was not acting. He believed her.

"Come, honey, forget it. You're straight,

I know it. I must be off now, an' I'll look for you at noon to-morrow. Pug Ryan's saloon. I've got the swag planted under a loose board under t' bed. Pug don't know it."

He kissed her, then walked to the door and listened intently. He smiled assurance to Nora across the room, then swung open the door. With a wolfish snarl and a blasphemous oath he recoiled, clawing for his gun as he did.

Framed in the doorway, illuminated by the light in the room, his characteristic smile wreathing his bronze face, stood Detective Mooney!

"Don't unlimber that smoke-wagon, Sawyer," cautioned Mooney quietly. "Hands front!"

The cracksman's eyes were narrowed to slits as he noted that the detective's hands were deep in his overcoat pocket. Instantly he whirled and sprang for the window and threw it up. A laugh followed his attempt as he looked down to behold two uniformed policemen standing below. His head turned slowly, just enough to see the mocking smile on the detective's face. Maddened, his ears drumming from the surging blood in his head, he twisted his body around warily and then sprang! He landed behind a large gas stove, his gun pointing over the top.

"Out o' that doorway, you dirty home-wrecker! Inside or I'll drill ye! No, honey; you keep out o' this." Nora's hand was reaching for the tiny automatic that she dropped when surprised by Dave. "Co' on, d—— ye; I've a notion t' kill yer, anyhow."

The detective had by this time stepped into the room, kicking the door shut. The smile had now vanished from his face, leaving a grim set visage with two gray eyes that focused the menacing weapon.

"People with big talk do little killing," he said, with sneering contempt. His challenge was instantly followed by a muffled roar, and a spurt of flame leaped from his overcoat pocket, leaving spirals of thin smoke and the odor of smoldering cloth as the cracksman's revolver spun and crashed against the wall.

"Well, Dave," Mooney was smiling as he was adjusting the handcuffs on his prisoner's wrists, "I've got you, and I don't think that the Boston *Times* will have to recant that passage about you taking an extended trip."

THE "ANGEL-FACED BOY" IS ARRESTED

THE "Angel-faced Boy" was arrested recently for the twenty-fourth time in his twenty-two years.

This is the name by which the police know Elmer Dillon, a former Brooklyn choir boy, who was locked up in police headquarters charged with grand larceny. He called himself Edward Doyle of 40 Middah street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

The young man was arrested by Patrolman Hass of the Old Slip Station after a man who felt his pocket being picked chased him into a corner of the Hudson Terminal building.

All of this took place just as Henry Haifer of Verona, N. J., was about to descend to the Hudson tube entrance to begin his journey home. As he pressed through the crowd he felt his purse jumping with suspicious animation about his hip pocket. When he reached back to secure it he discovered it disappearing in somebody else's hand.

With a shout Mr. Haifer began to pursue the hand. Others joined the chase, which led up stairways and down hallways, around women with bundles, and between fruit stands. Finally the pursued, either out of breath or forgetting himself in the tumult he had precipitated, ran into a corner, and was caught.

At police headquarters it was said that Dillon was arrested first in 1908 for unlawful entry. He has been convicted several times and has served several short sentences.

Twin Guards

by

Harry Freeman Thompson

CHAPTER ONE

THE system at the Middlesex Safe Deposit is extremely simple, and is (or was) reckoned perfect. For a few dollars a year you rent a strong-box in the vault and receive two keys. To open your box the man in charge must first insert his key. It is surrounded by such foundations of steel and concrete as would make dynamite feel dubious. The single entrance to the vault is by way of a steel grille, the openings of the latticework allowing a clear view of the whole interior. The key to the grille is in the possession of a uniformed commissionaire, who watches while you transfer valuables to or from your strong-box. And access to the commissionaire is by way of another locked gate, of which the key is held by the secretary of the company, on duty during business hours. In order to reach the vault every caller has therefore to pass the secretary, the locked gate, the commissionaire, and the locked grille. During the night a watchman keeps guard.

Up to the day when the managing director of the company called on Ventress the system of the Safe Deposit had worked with oil-smooth perfection. There had been no "incidents," no complaints, no suggestion of unreliability. The reputation of the Safe Deposit stood as high in its respective line as the Sub-Treasury's.

Hulley, the managing director, had little to do but sign checks for the salaries of the staff of three and himself. His real activities lay with bank directorates. He was a man of solidity, both financial and physical, and his name was usually prominent on the lists of Christmas funds and other charities.

"I wish to state," he began, "that the matter I have to place before you is extremely confidential." There was a quintessence of board-room manner about Hulley.

Ventress nodded brusquely. "I'm a safe deposit for clients' secrets," he answered.

"That is not a very happy analogy, Mr. Ventress. I am very much afraid there is some loophole in our system. Yesterday it seemed impossible, but to-day, after all the evidence I've heard, I want you to realize that the reputation of a safe deposit company has to be beyond suspicion—like Cæsar's wife, beyond suspicion."

"If my memory of Roman history is correct," put in Ventress, "that analogy is also somewhat unhappy."

Hulley did not approve of jesting. "Be that as it may," he answered stiffly, "I am extremely anxious to avoid publicity. If a breath of scandal affecting us should reach

the newspapers it would be a very serious matter. That is why I am *not* at present calling in the services of the police. They are too much in touch with reporters. No doubt some of them receive a monetary reward for passing on items of information."

"Is this a scientific problem—something inside my province? I'm not an ordinary criminal-chaser."

"Your reputation, Mr. Ventress, is thoroughly well known to me. That is why I am here confiding in you. Whether this matter has a scientific bearing or no, I cannot at present say. It is extremely mysterious. I suspect some new scientific discovery criminally applied. The modern criminal goes to science for his weapons."

"The crux of this matter?" demanded Ventress abruptly.

"I must first explain the system under which we work," replied Hulley, who was accustomed to having people listen to him with deference, and he proceeded to expound in great detail. Eventually he came to the point.

"Box No. 310, on the third row of the left-hand side, is rented by a Mr. Rondthaler, dealer in precious stones. He has used it for many months. On Wednesday of last week he entered the vault with a client of his, a Paris dealer, and deposited a valuable pearl necklace. This operation was seen by our commissionaire, McCrimmon, in whom I have placed great confidence. On Tuesday of this week Mr. Rondthaler and his client again repair to the vault to take away the necklace, and find—or allege that they find—it missing. Between those dates neither of the dealers has entered the vault, according to the evidence of both the commissionaire and the secretary's own records. I cannot suppose that both of our staff would lie over such a matter. They have comfortable positions, and I can see no reason why they should jeopardize their livelihood."

"Rondthaler has the only key to 310?"

"Decidedly."

"A criminal might have got an impression of that key, made a duplicate, rented a box near to 310 and opened 310 as if it were his own, with the connivance of one of you men."

"McCrimmon watches every access to the strong-boxes. That is the routine of his duties, and, as I said before, he has our confidence."

"Routine is always liable to suffer from temporary aberration of mind."

"But each box is prominently marked in white with its number, and McCrimmon accompanies every caller inside, and inserts his key first, so that the customer can insert his and gain entrance to his box. My lifelong experience has given me, I venture to think, more than a little knowledge of human nature, and I do not believe that McCrimmon is anything but 100 per cent. honest.

Ventress sniffed. He took no second-hand opinions from any one. "Science exhausts the obvious before it proceeds to the abnormal," he remarked sententiously.

"Further," clinched Hulley, "no box near to 310 has been newly rented within the past four months."

"What is your liability towards a renter?" asked the scientist abruptly.

"There is no definite liability on the part of the company. But what I fear is that Mr. Rondthaler will make a public notification of his loss, and this would very seriously affect the reputation of the Safe Deposit. Confidence in us would be shattered."

"Naturally. And meanwhile you're trying to keep him from shouting. Has he asked you to make good the loss of the necklace?"

"Not precisely as yet, but I can foresee such a claim on his part."

"Pay up or public scandal. And you want me to devise an explanation for Cæsar's wife?" Ventress was not greatly interested in the case, which seemed on the face of it an ordinary criminal matter, and he did not care whether Hulley took offence at his words or not.

But this offhandness had the effect of increasing the director's eagerness to have Ventress solve the mystery. "I want the truth," he replied, "and with your acumen and specialized knowledge I believe you can

give it to me. I myself have exhausted all the ordinary explanations."

"Including chicanery on the part of the jewel merchant?"

"I make no allegation," answered Hulley with characteristic caution, "yet I have thought over that possibility very seriously. I cannot see how fraud, if fraud there were, has been carried through."

Unlike the usual scientist, Ventress was an excellent man of business. "Well," he responded brusquely, "I see nothing in this case so far but ordinary police work. I'd better warn you that means a heavier fee than usual."

"I fail to follow you."

"If you asked Christy to paint you an advertisement for hair tonic, you couldn't expect to get it for less than a double fee, could you?"

The remainder of the interview was barter.

CHAPTER TWO

VENTRESS'S first procedure was to call at the Middlesex Safe Deposit Vaults in the character of a would-be renter of a strong-box, in order to observe the normal sequence of events. He found that they corresponded exactly to the abundant details given by the managing director. He then revealed himself abruptly as the investigator, producing a signed authorization.

McCrimmon, the commissionaire, a conspicuously honest-looking old policeman, went pale at Ventress's words.

"This affair will ruin me, sir," he muttered. "I'll never get another job if I'm discharged from here."

"Not if you tell me frankly all you know and get the mystery straightened," returned Ventress with a sudden kindness.

"I told everything to Mr. Hulley, sir; every single thing I know. I haven't an idea how a robbery could possibly have happened." He hesitated for a moment. "And I don't believe it did happen."

"Ah! They pocketed the necklace and claimed it wasn't in the safe?"

"That's it, sir. That foreign gentleman from Paris."

"Or Rondthaler."

"Well, I wouldn't exactly say that. I've known him coming here for some time, and he always seemed to me straightforward."

"Bring the secretary here," ordered Ventress.

"The commissionaire hesitated again. "I mustn't leave the vault alone," he answered.

"Quite right! Then I'll wait in the passage outside the grille."

Presently McCrimmon was back with the message that the secretary must not leave his office.

Ventress made no demur to this obedience of rules. He went himself to the secretary's slip of an office abutting on the entrance and began a cross-examination of that formal and tepid official, a young-oldish man of such a colorless and hairless facial aspect that he suggested a recent visit to a bleaching tub.

In guarded terms the secretary voiced the same theory as McCrimmon. He was suspicious of jewel merchants in general. Many of them were a—er—shady lot, especially men like Mr. Rondthaler, who had no office of their own and did business in restaurants and on the curbstone. Ventress heard him through without comment, though he knew that this curious method of transacting business was quite usual, and that there were officeless jewel merchants of excellent reputation. In fact, a man who exercises his calling in the public view has necessarily to keep a rein on himself.

"Show me your night arrangements and Sunday arrangements," Ventress then asked.

The bleached secretary aroused himself to a pale semblance of enthusiasm, and demonstrated the treble lockings at night-time, the word-combination and time-locks, the burglar alarms, and the everything-proof doors. He considered the night watchman's post a pure formality. Ventress delved minutely into this aspect of the system, examined locks with a powerful magnifying-glass, sniffed around like a hound in a covert, sprang surprise questions on the secretary, in whose capabilities he

felt no confidence, and in general raked the system of the Safe Deposit with a volley of mental analysis.

But he could find nothing on which to grip his teeth.

"Where can I see Rondthaler?" he finally asked.

The secretary suggested his inquiring at Sayre's Chop House, near Maiden Lane. That undistinguished-looking street, the focus of New York's trade in precious stones, probably houses more diverse nationalities than any other thoroughfare of similar length. Sayre's Chop House, thoroughly foreign in aspect, is filled at all hours of the day with inordinately shrewd-looking men, who sit at small three-legged tables sipping strong black coffee, and casually unrolling wash-leather bands containing jewels of the value of thousands of dollars and conversing in guarded whispers in half a dozen languages. Ventress made his way to the head waiter and inquired for his man. The answer was that if he would sit down and wait Mr. Rondthaler would be sure to turn up eventually.

Ventress decided to wait, though waiting was not a specialty of his temperament, and the super-shrewd, cosmopolitan atmosphere of this jewel exchange rasped against his tastes. Several men approached his table at various times and inquired ingratiatingly if he were "in the market" for diamonds or emeralds or sapphires. Ventress froze them.

Two hours of the afternoon went by fruitlessly, and with overflowing irritation he was about to leave when the head waiter brought up to the table a well-built man of thirty odd, with a neat dark, close-trimmed mustache, a healthy color, a brisk, pleasant glance, and a decidedly pleasant smile. Ventress, expecting to meet a crook whom his instincts would at once detect, felt taken aback.

"What can I do for *you*, sir?" greeted the jewel merchant in the customary formula of business.

Ventress, forgetting his irritation in his surprise, passed across, politely enough, his letter of authorization from the managing director of the Safe Deposit.

Rondthaler, looking him over with a frankness which carried no offence, remarked: "I should not have taken you for a detective."

"I'm not. I'm a consulting chemist."

"Good! What can I tell you?"

"Your side of the case."

The jewel merchant lowered his voice to the customary whisper of the room, but his words were frank and open. He gave his narrative crisply and clearly. Monsieur Matard, his Paris client, was a jewel dealer of reputation, and however the robbery had been carried out, it could be taken for granted that the Frenchman had no complicity in it.

"What's the value of the necklace,"

"Fifty thousand, roughly."

"And if you don't get it back?"

A shadow passed over the features of the jewel merchant, leaving them gray and cold like a dead fire. "In that case," he answered, "I should have to begin all over again. I should have lost ten years of my life. And there's a girl I'm engaged to——"

Down below the hard outer shell of the consultant was a core of human feelings. These words vibrated within him. "Pearls are not like stones," he remarked sympathetically. "They can't be disguised by further cutting. If yours are offered for sale here or in Europe they would be recognized."

"Probably shipped out to India or the Far East," returned the jewel merchant with bitterness.

"What's your theory of the disappearance?"

"To my mind there's only one possible explanation."

"And that is——"

"The secretary at the Safe Deposit."

"Your reasons?"

"Twenty dollars a week or thereabouts, and no prospects. Too much of a temptation to be in charge of all those valuables."

"And McCrimmon?"

"He always looks to me the essence of honesty. I don't accuse him. But that secretary fellow——" He pursed up his lips suggestively.

Ventress felt as though he were swim-

ming in a sea shrouded by mist, with no indication as to the direction where land lay. His investigations had so far given him no tangible clue whatever. These mutual suspicions were the merest theories. He was outside his own special province. If there were some scientific fact at which he could grasp and use for a handhold!

His eye caught the glint of a steel chain leading into the jewel merchant's right-hand trouser pocket. "Is that where you keep your keys?" He pointed.

"Yes. Where else should I keep them?" Rondthaler fished out the chain, and showed that it was securely fastened at one end. At the other end was a ring with three keys, one obviously a latchkey, the other a bureau key, the third a Yale lock key.

"For box 310?" inquired Ventress, pointing again.

"Yes."

"Let me see them."

He unsnapped his pocket magnifying-glass and examined all three minutely.

"Looking for wax marks?" suggested Rondthaler. "I had thought of that myself. But there's nothing to be seen."

Ventress's face suddenly lighted up with the zeal of the investigator. "Wrap these keys carefully in tissue-paper," he ordered, "and come to my laboratory."

"What do you propose to do with them?"

"Nickel-plate them."

"I don't see the object."

But Ventress was already picking up his hat and thrusting a bill towards the waiter.

CHAPTER THREE

IN a small glass tank was a colorless solution of nickel sulphate. Electric wires led at one end to a rod of pure nickel pendant in the solution, and at the other end to hooks from which the three keys hung. For over an hour a very tiny current of electricity had been ferrying ions of metal from the anode of nickel to the cathode formed by the keys.

Ventress now removed them carefully, dried them in a gas oven, and showed them one by one to Rondthaler. "These two," he demonstrated, "show the polish of nickel-plating all around, but the Yale key, you note, is plated on one side only."

"What does that convey?"

"It means that one side of it has been pressed against wax, which has left an invisible film on the metal. But that minute film has been sufficient to resist the electric current."

"There might have been grease in my pocket."

"Then all three keys would have been affected. No," deduced Ventress triumphantly, "there's been a wax impression taken of your Yale key."

"But who? That secretary fellow?"

"You sit about in cafés with your keys in your trouser pocket," rasped Ventress. "What could be simpler for a trained pickpocket than to pull them out gently, take a wax impression, and replace them? One man holds you in conversation while the other does the trick."

Rondthaler became very thoughtful. He was evidently searching his memory for an occasion where this would have been possible.

"Frankly," added Ventress, "I wouldn't trust myself with valuables inside Sayre's."

"We always have to run risks in the jewel trade," answered Rondthaler. "We get calloused; wait while I think."

But eventually he gave up the task of searching his recollections. "One meets and talks with so many men. It's hopeless to work the case from that end."

"Then we must put your recollections alongside of McCrimmon's," said Ventress sanguinely. "If he has recently shown some one into the vault who corresponds to some one you've talked business to recently, we're hot on the scent."

They drove forthwith to the Middlesex Safe Deposit, but found it closed for the day. The night watchman explained that McCrimmon and the secretary had just left. Yes, he knew the commissionaire's address. It was in the "Seventies." Ventress and the jewel merchant re-entered their taxi and drove to a row of high-stoop brownstone fronts in the "respectable" rooming-house

area of the West Side. The cab had evidently outpaced McCrimmon's train, for the landlady who opened the door informed them that he had not yet returned from his work.

"Is his wife in?" asked Ventress.

"No, sir, he's a widower. I couldn't let you wait in his room, but if you'd like to sit in my parlor——" She opened with pride the door of her state room, reserved for the minister and other distinguished visitors. Then, with the morbid curiosity of the lower classes, always ready to put the worst interpretation on any event, she inquired sidlingly, "I hope he's not been doing anything wrong, has he?"

"Nothing!" said Ventress firmly.

She looked a trifle disappointed. "He's always been so regular in his habits, but last Thursday when he went out for the night and didn't return till Saturday afternoon, I kept wondering-like what had happened to him."

"Did you ask him?"

"Oh, no, sir! I knows how to keep myself to myself."

"You say he has been always regular in his habits. Rent punctual?"

"Yes, sir."

"Drink?"

"Never since I've known him, sir."

"Women?"

"Oh, no, sir! I wouldn't allow such a thing in my house!"

A heavy step in the passage outside indicated the return of McCrimmon. The landlady went out to inform him of the visitors. He seemed surprised to see Ventress and Rondthaler, but invited them to come upstairs to his room—a bed- sitting-room plainly furnished, but kept with scrupulous neatness and decorated with mementoes of his service on "the force."

Ventress had already whispered to the jewel merchant to keep silent and allow him to conduct all the questioning. He began: "I want to compare your recollections of recent callers at the Safe Deposit with men whom Mr. Rondthaler has done business with lately."

"Yes, sir, with pleasure."

"First, you were on duty every day last week and this week?"

"Yes, sir."

"Quite sure?"

"I've never missed a day for the past two years—not a single day."

"If you were ill who would replace you?"

"Mr. Hulley would be told, and he would send one of his bank messengers to take my place."

Ventress turned to the jewel merchant. "Now give close descriptions of every man or woman you can remember meeting during the three weeks before the necklace was discovered to be missing."

It was a lengthy and tedious task. McCrimmon was evidently concentrating his mind intently, but he could match no recollection against that of Rondthaler. Then they tried the reverse way around, the commissionaire endeavoring to describe the callers at the Safe Deposit, and Rondthaler listening. Nothing tangible resulted.

Ventress had meanwhile been observing them both, on the keen watch for some clue. He was forced to the conclusion that they were both honest men, and both of them eager to have the mystery cleared up. Any lingering suspicion of the bona-fides of Rondthaler vanished, while McCrimmon's truthfulness seemed transparent.

Yet the landlady's words reverberated in Ventress's sub-consciousness. He asked abruptly: "You stayed out one night last week, didn't you?"

The answer came without hesitation: "Yes, sir, at my brother's house."

"And went to work from there, returning home Saturday afternoon?"

"That's quite right. He lives over in Brooklyn, so it was quicker to go straight to work from there."

"But you don't go about of an evening in your uniform?"

"No, sir; I took it with me in a bag. I went to stay the night because he was ill and asked me to come."

The ring of sincerity was in every word uttered by the commissionaire. It was impossible to doubt that he was speaking the truth. Ventress had been elated over his discovery in connection with the Yale key,

but now disappointment settled upon him. He sighed and rose to leave.

McCrimmon accompanied them downstairs to the front door of the house. "Is there nothing more I can tell you, sir?" he asked earnestly. "It means a great deal to me to have this matter cleared up."

"You might give me your brother's address."

McCrimmon took out an old envelope and penciled the address on the back.

CHAPTER FOUR

IT was a silent drive downtown in the taxi. Ventress made no comment on the evening's disappointment, and the jewel merchant was too tactful to force unwanted questions. But nearing Times Square he ventured to ask: "What's to be the next move? Would anything be gained by calling on McCrimmon's brother?"

Ventress, for want of a reply, took out the envelope to scan the address written on it, holding the paper close to his eyes in the dim light.

Suddenly a faint tinge of some unusual odor tanged his extraordinary keen sense of smell. He sniffed at the envelope—sniffed again hard, rolled, as it were, that infinitesimal fragment of odor on the sensitive membranes of his nostrils, furrowed his forehead in thought, then ordered the chauffeur to drive to Brooklyn.

"What have you discovered?" asked Rondthaler eagerly.

But the scientist was so absorbed in his new-born theory of the mystery that the question passed over him totally unheard.

The district to which they drove is compounded mostly of the sordid and the sinister. But McCrimmon's particular block proved to be an oasis in the desert, a group of houses of a substantial mid-Victorian aspect, occupied by teachers of music, cheap dentistry exponents, dressmakers, and other home businesses.

Ventress left the taxi at one end of the street, ordered it to wait for him, and walked with Rondthaler to No. 44. He gave a postman's tinkle to the bell, knowing that this would always bring some one speedily in answer. The door was opened by a young woman—pretty, but sharp-featured and with an indefinable aspect of the declassé. "What do you want?" she asked suspiciously.

"Mr. McCrimmon," answered Ventress.

"There's no Mr. McCrimmon living here."

"This is No. 44, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Do you know any one of that name living in the neighborhood?"

"No." She held the door as though to close it on them.

"I must have made a mistake," said Ventress. "Sorry to have troubled you."

"Queer!" commented the jewel merchant as they returned toward the waiting taxi.

Ventress answered briskly: "I want you to drive to Manhattan and bring McCrimmon back with you. Meanwhile I'll stay around here and wait. Don't question him on the way; leave that to me."

"Right! I'll hurry."

It was nearly two hours before Rondthaler returned with the commissionaire. Obeying orders, he had entered into no conversation beyond generalities.

Ventress at once took up the questioning: "Your brother lives at No. 44, doesn't he?"

"Yes, sir, but what do you want me here for?"

"To give exact answers to my questions!" snapped Ventress. "Is he a man of about your own age and rather like you in appearance?"

"When we were younger we used to be taken for one another, but now time has changed us a good deal."

"There's a young woman, rather pretty, living at No. 44. Who is she—your brother's daughter, or wife, or what?"

McCrimmon hesitated before answering: "Not exactly his wife."

"Now about yourself. You came to 44 to stay the night on Thursday evening last?"

"On Friday evening, sir."

"Thursday, your landlady mentioned."

"That's a mistake of hers. I came on

Friday, stayed the night because my brother was ill and wanted me near him, went to work on Saturday morning, came back here after work, found him very much better, and then back to my own room in Manhattan."

"Were you feeling in good health on the Saturday?"

"Not very good somehow, sir. I had a disturbed night and felt a bit dizzy."

"Do you ever take chloral for sleeplessness?"

"Never!" returned McCrimmon with genuine surprise at the question. "Why should I? I sleep sound enough."

"You're positive about Friday and not Thursday?"

"Of course I am! I've told you several times I only went to my brother's for a single night."

"And one last question," pursued Ventress, looking at him searchingly. "What does your brother do for a living?"

"You'd better ask him yourself!" retorted McCrimmon resentfully.

"That's all I want from you." Ventress passed over a bill. "This is to pay your fare back to Manhattan and recompense you for the trouble I've put you to."

The commissionaire hesitated, but decided to take the money.

CHAPTER FIVE

"WELL?" queried Rondthaler eagerly when they were again alone.

"The method of the robbery is perfectly clear now," said Ventress with his air of being superior to any mystery on earth or in heaven.

"I don't see it."

"While you were fetching McCrimmon I waited along the street. I saw the brother entering 44. There's a striking resemblance between the two."

"Well?"

"That's the man who stole your necklace," returned Ventress with dramatic abruptness.

"But how on earth——"

"They drugged McCrimmon with chloral. Kept him unconscious at 44 during the whole of the Friday. He's honestly under the impression that he was there for one night only, but he was actually there for two nights and a day."

Rondthaler had now caught on to the line of deduction. He joined in: "And on the Friday this brother dressed himself in McGrimmon's uniform"—Ventress, who preferred to make all deductions himself, took possession of the uncoiling of the chain of events—"and went in his place to the Safe Deposit. Walked in calmly at the opening hour in McCrimmon's uniform. That bleached secretary is a dull fool, and he wouldn't have noticed the difference. Brainless routine deadens a man's perceptions. Once in the commissionaire's place, the rest was perfectly simple for the brother. He, having his brother's master-key and the other one, had merely to unlock your strong-box at some quiet hour of the day and pocket your necklace."

"But how would he get the duplicate key?"

"Probably he was not the one who took the wax impression. I suspect an organized gang of them—a man with brains to plan, a man with hands to get the key, and a man with a lucky resemblance to get inside the vault. Given a passable disguise, the rest was child's play."

"Of course! But you're a marvel to have unraveled it so quickly!" exclaimed Rondthaler gratefully. "Now to get the police onto them."

"First to Hulley," amended Ventress. "My commission is from him. He's naturally anxious to avoid publicity, and I must leave any further steps which are to be taken to him."

"My necklace may be at No. 44 at this very moment!"

"It may. Wherever it is we'll get it back sure enough. Don't worry any further. If you'll take my advice you'll go straight to the young lady you're engaged to and——"

But Rondthaler needed no prompting on that aspect of the case.

Greater than Hate

by Jack J. Gottlieb

CLOSING the door ever so carefully, the gunman moved over boards that groaned beneath his gigantic form and sat down by the table. For a moment he allowed his blue-green orbs to travel about the room—a cubby-hole of a place situated in the rear of Windy Dan McNamara's rathskeller. His roving gaze finally paused at the other occupant of the room. His very thin lips curved in a mirthless smile.

"Hello, Kling," he said.

The man called Kling nodded his head in transient greeting. As white is the opposite of black, so was he the reverse of his hard-faced visitor. He was short and lithe; his complexion was very pale, and his hair was parted in the centre with sleek preciseness. Like "Big Pete" Riordan, Kling's occupation was outside the pale of the law, but he did not resort to force and gunplay to goad the world into giving him a living. Warren Kling was an astute, hard-working, even talented counterfeiter.

"How are things, Pete?" he said pleasantly to the other. "Making out all right?"

It was really a query asking Riordan what he wanted, and the gunman understood it as such. The two did not have much to do with each other. Riordan, shifting in his chair, bent forward impressively.

"Kling, you might as well get ready to lose Myra."

The counterfeiter's brows drew together in a linear frown. It was evident that he did not relish the words of the gunman. He did not care to lose the services of Myra Thompson, who was making his career as counterfeiter a success. Myra Thompson was his "business" associate, his "long-green shover." It was she who, aided by an adroitness and skill with which she was gifted, passed the false bills he manufactured onto unsuspecting others. Myra Thompson was an absolute necessity to his scheme of things. Without her Kling knew that the career he now pursued would be short and succinct.

"What do you mean?" he asked. There was rasping querulousness in his tone.

The gunman's lips set in a hard line. He leveled a huge, gnarled forefinger.

"Listen!"-he said. "Ever since I met up with Myra I've taken a liking to her. She's my idea of a girl that will make a guy like me a swell wife. So I've come to this decision: I'm gonna marry her."

Kling laughed harshly, a single uncouth note.

"You are, eh? Don't make me smile, Riordan. Myra would not even give you a glance, let alone tie up with you. So all-fired sure about her, are you?"

Riordan's face took on a sinister aspect.

"She won't, eh? Wait and see; just wait and see."

"Why tell me about it, then?"

"I'm just warnin' you."

"Don't make me laugh, Riordan." Kling got to his feet slowly. He was hardly on the verge of laughter. There was menace in his voice as he said:

"Just you listen to what I'm going to say. Myra works for me, but she also is a friend of mine. She's a clean girl. Because she's a crook it doesn't mean that anybody can get gay with her. I've protected her in the past, and I mean to do so as long as it's necessary."

He took out a small Luger from his pocket and placed it on the table.

"Understand," he continued, "I'm not accusing you of trying to put anything over on Myra. You couldn't if you tried, anyway. But I know your reputation. Now, listen! I'm willing to play fair. Go to Myra—or wait here; she'll be here any minute now—and ask her to marry you. If she's willing, *I'm* willing to stand the loss. And I'll see everything's done right. But if she refuses you, you're to let her alone—strictly alone—in the future. Understand?"

He picked up the Luger and toyed with it. He ignored Big Pete's grating laugh of self-assurance.

"But you haven't the ghost of a chance, Riordan. My personal opinion. I doubt if Myra would be willing to marry even me if I asked her. Ever hear of that thing they call love? I don't know what it is, but—— Anyway, Myra believes in it. And she doesn't love you, Riordan. That I'm sure of. In fact, if you understand me correctly, I think she has an aversion to you."

A rumble issued from the gunman's thick throat. He understood Kling correctly. But before he could answer there was an interruption. The door opened and Myra Thompson stepped into the room.

An even indifferent observer would have remarked that the girl was out of place in that bleak, dirt-drenched room. A large, cozily furnished chamber of the "home" variety would have made a much more suitable background for her. Myra was not beautiful, but her features were appealing. Her hair was straight and lustrous and black as a raven's wing; her nose was sensitive; her eyes were big and lambent and intelligently dark. Just now there was the light of anger in them; her very red lips were compressed in stoic ire.

"You are right, Warren," she said to Kling calmly. "I most certainly have a distinct aversion to Riordan."

Big Pete, flushing, half arose from his seat. His lips started to frame a question, but no audible sound issued from them. It was Kling who put Riordan's unspoken query into words.

"Myra! You heard?"

"Enough to understand everything." She regarded Big Pete in dignified hauteur.

Riordan laughed. It was not an easy laugh.

"You—you don't mean what you just said, do you, Myra? You know I—I like you."

He made an impulsive movement toward her, but she drew back quickly.

"I do mean it!" she cried. "Every word of it. Don't touch me! Do you think I'd become the wife of a man like you? So sure of me, were you?"

"You're a crook yourself," Riordan sneered.

"That may be. But I'm clean. I entered the game strictly as a business proposition, and not because I had natural tendencies for it. My home life forced me to become a thief, you two know that well enough." Her eyes flashed. "Besides, I don't intend to remain a crook forever."

"What do you mean by that?" Kling cried, springing up.

Myra Thompson drew herself up proudly.

"I mean just that and more, Warren. I do not mean to be a thief all my life. The constant dread of being caught——"

Pete Riordan interrupted her with an

acrid chuckle. It was a most unpleasant sound.

"Funny thing, this sudden reformin' of yours," he growled. "I've a hunch that it's more than that. Come clean now, Myra! Who is he?"

"It's none of your business!" cried the girl spiritedly.

"Don't mind Riordan, Myra," said Kling not unkindly. "Tell *me*. Who put these poor but proud ideas into your head?"

"Poor but proud! Warren, don't you give me credit for being able to think for myself? Those proud but poor ideas, as you call them, are my own. It's not that. It—it's——"

She seemed to hesitate. Kling's brows raised.

"So there's really a man in the case, as Riordan suggested?"

"Yes!" She shot out the word quickly, her face white to the lips. "There is! And he's not one of us, Warren. He's a good man with splendid convictions, white all through. He's the direct opposite of Riordan. I idolize him. And I realize that if I'm to make him a good wife it will be necessary to chuck this crooked business for good and all!"

"Then—you intend to leave me, Myra?"

"I do. I came here with the sole purpose of telling you about this. I didn't figure Riordan would be here."

A snarl came to the gunman's lips. So there was another man! Under the table his hands clenched into pile-driving, blue-lined fists. That Myra would accept him, he who had a terrific reputation in the underworld, he had taken for granted. In fact he had really believed that she would jump at the chance. Now——

"Does this white-collared feller of yours know you're a thief?" he questioned with a savage snarl. "You didn't have the nerve to tell him about it, I'll bet. When he finds out about it he'll chuck you for another skirt. They're all alike!"

Myra Thompson smiled in cool derision.

"You poor fish! Do you think every one would do the same things you do? Yesterday he asked me to marry him, and I told him everything. What he did was to take me in his arms and kiss me. 'That's all right, honey,' he said. 'We'll start clean from now on. I've faith in you.' "

Kling, who knew nothing whatever of that transient emotion called love, studied the face of his reformed partner. A grand passion indeed it must be, he decided. So that was why Myra had recently spoken so many times of love!

"Who is the man, Myra?" he inquired. "Do I know him?"

She raised her head on high boldly.

"Very well indeed. He is Stephen Blue!"

Her words had the same effect upon her listeners as a series of unexpected explosions would have had. Steve Blue! *Detective* Steve Blue! Blue, a headquarters man, a bull, the natural enemy of those with whom Myra associated. Blue, whom Kling and Big Pete and others of their ilk instinctively loathed and dreaded, who was known to pursue and get his man when on the hunt without exception. For a moment there was racking stillness in that box of a room.

Then a growl issued from Riordan's throat. His blue-green eyes narrowed with hatred and anger. So this bull, the man he hated above all others, the man who twice had sent him to stir, the man who thwarted him time and time again—this man was the one Myra had chosen in preference to him! On the instant the gunman's enmity towards Blue increased a hundredfold. When Blue had sent him up for the second time he had promised himself that he would one day "get" the detective and even up the score. And now Riordan realized that this new score, the one involving Myra, was a thousand times more cogent than the old one.

His lips drew back, showing stained teeth, as he half arose from his seat. But Kling stilled him and turned to Myra sharply.

"Steve Blue, is it?" he cried. "And you told him everything. How sure are you that he wasn't playing with you so that he could get *me?* And you—you——"

"Wait a minute, Warren." The girl held up a restraining hand. "Do you think I'm a fool? I told him I wasn't leading an honest life, but that's all. I said nothing else; I didn't mention you. There's nothing to fear. And as for your crazy suggestion

that Stephen is merely playing with me——" She paused, and her nostrils dilated angrily.

Kling drew a sigh of relief. Riordan, his face contorted with passion, got up to go. At the doorway he turned, scowling darkly, then went out.

A Goliath in size, his long supple arms swinging loosely from powerfully huge shoulders, Riordan's head came dangerously near touching the low ceiling as he traversed the narrow corridor. His eyes were on the ground, contemplative and hard, and his ear was attuned to no sound save the deriding laughter of Myra Thompson. So it was that he neither saw nor heard "Crutch" Attmon, a cripple who worked in Windy Dan McNamara's place, until he was well-nigh upon him.

It was a most inopportune moment for the cripple. In the frescoed mind of the big gunman his rage, seething and turbulent, was demanding an outlet. Riordan's foot went out; it jerked the crutch from underneath the arm of the one-legged man. Crutch Attmon, taken by surprise, fell to the floor with a thud.

"Huh!" said the gunman, his eyes glittering. "Guess you won't be blockin' the passage again."

He passed Crutch and went down the stairs. The fallen man picked himself up and watched the huge form swing out of sight. In the heart of Crutch Attmon there was no malice, no hatred directed towards Pete Riordan. He was already used to such mishandlings. The men and women who made Windy Dan's place their habitat, persons of the underworld, were prone to consider him a witless nincompoop upon whom they could vent their wrath whenever they so desired. And probably because it was his nature, or because he realized that resistance would be futile, Crutch showed no passion against those who made him eat humble pie. As for his feelings in the matter, time had succeeded in making them emollient.

Yet the face of Crutch Attmon at this precise moment was not without the lines of animosity. Big Pete Riordan had not given a thought to the matter of Crutch's being so near the back room; had he he *might* have guessed that Crutch had played the part of eavesdropper. Passing the room, Crutch had been attracted by loud voices. Even then he might not have remained to listen had he not heard the name of Steve Blue. Stopping, he had heard, and now he understood.

And with that understanding there came to him the revival of a hatred which had smoldered in his breast for six long years. Crutch Attmon, like Riordan, loathed the efficient detective with that lingering, all-consuming enmity which is said to never die. It was mainly due to Steve Blue that he was a cripple for life. Six years ago, at the age of twenty-one, Wyatt Attmon had been a crook among the best of them. His career had promised to be a highly diversified, successful (in the way criminals reckon success) and notorious one, until the time of the Stack Mill robbery. It was Steve Blue who had discovered the robbers at work and who, together with a bluecoat, had put the thieves to flight. Whether it was Blue or his companion who had riddled Attmon's left leg with five bullets, making amputation necessary, Crutch did not know, but since that time hating Steve Blue had become second nature to him.

Because of his crippled condition Crutch had been favored with a very light sentence. Out of stir, however, he found that he was a ruined man in more than the physical sense. No longer could he hope to turn the tricks he had maneuvered before the disastrous mill job; he was an outcast, scum in the muck. Those who before had respected him now chided and growled at and struck him. Out of sheer mercifulness Windy Dan, remembering the boy's more puissant days, gave him a job and saved him from starvation.

And through it all Crutch remembered that it was Steve Blue who had shoved him from the top rung to the mire below. Even when Myra Thompson came into his drab life, and a great idolization visited the shriveling soul of him, the feeling of hate he bore for Detective Blue did not lessen the least whit. As he secretly adored Myra, longing to caress her glistening hair of sloe

whenever she was near him, thrilling whenever she glanced his way or dropped a casual word to him, so did he hate Steve Blue. In the case of the girl he knew that he could never hope to possess her love, that he must remain forever silent concerning his feeling toward her. But as for Steve Blue, Crutch hoped for an opportunity whereby his hatred of the detective could be galvanized into action.

And now Myra Thompson professed that she loved Steve Blue! There was bestial fury in the heart of Crutch. Steve Blue, the human bloodhound, the man who had ruined his very life, of all men was *he* to be the one to acquire Myra? No! No! That would never be! It *must* never be! He, Crutch Attmon, the butt of coarse tricksters, the scorn of Windy Dan's patronizers, he'd prevent it if it was the last thing he'd do on earth!

The wrath of Big Pete Riordan was not in the least appeased upon flooring Crutch Attmon. Manhandling the cripple had grown to be second nature with the big gunman. Riordan felt no satisfaction in hurting Crutch; his cup of bitterness was still filled to overflowing.

So Steve Blue, his worst enemy, was stealing his girl, eh? Riordan fumed as he trod down the stairs. He had always considered Myra as "his girl," as some one to be had upon a minute's notice. And now the flatfoot—curse him!—was taking her from him. Riordan really believed that Steve Blue was "playing" the girl, professing that he loved her, either to rouse the gunman's jealousy or else get information whereby he might "get" Kling.

Well, Steve Blue had not gotten her yet. He, Riordan, was not going to play the part of the innocent bystander either!

That evening, in his room, the gunman paced back and forth, concentrating upon his problem. That he must have the girl he was determined upon; now that she had refused him, he wanted her more than ever! It was the old question of the spoiled child and the moon, though Riordan did not know that!

No, there was question as to his getting her. What he was deliberating over was the course to follow, how to go about eliminating Steve Blue. For the detective would have to be eliminated; there was no other way. And with Blue in the discard there was no doubt that the girl would turn to Riordan.

So reasoned the gunman.

Innate hatred of all those who represent the law, together with the animosity he harbored against the man who had twice sent him up, kindled the mind of Riordan with revolting enthusiasm. He set about erecting a plan whereby Steve Blue would be, so to speak, erased from among those present. And it was not long after he had gloatingly decided to murder the detective that Riordan hit upon a plan. The big gunman was a genius in his nefarious line.

"By this time to-morrow, Steve Blue, you're gonna be sleuthin' in hades." It was the last thing Riordan said before going to bed past midnight.

He bided his time the next day, keeping strictly to himself and perfecting his scheme. As the day progressed he showed no outer effects of the sinister thoughts occupying his mind, save that his lips were tautened more than was their usual wont and that the cold menace of his blue-green eyes was like the evil glitter of the orbs of a hawk just before it snatches at its prey. Otherwise he was stoical. When darkness fell he went up to his room and inspected his automatic carefully. He saw that it was all right, pocketed it and went over to Windy Dan's place.

He sought out McNamara and questioned him.

"Steve Blue taken his daily peek-in yet?"

The proprietor of the rathskeller nodded.

'Just a few minutes ago," he answered. "Good-natured as usual. Said he was glad to see the boys quiet, then went out. This is his night on the street, isn't it?"

"Don't know," lied Riordan. "Where's Crutch?"

Windy Dan frowned. "He's somewhere about. The boys were pestering the life out of him, and I made them stop it. Want to see him?"

The gunman ignored the query. As he

glanced up he caught sight of the cripple. He nodded a tense adieu to McNamara, then beckoned towards Crutch. The cripple hobbled after him to a secluded corner, where they were free from interruption.

Riordan leaned across the table, whispering his words:

"Crutch, you ain't any too sweet on Steve Blue, are you?"

Crutch Attmon started, flushed. He had been thinking of the detective. His fists clenched and his eyes grew hard.

The gunman smiled understandingly.

"Thought so, Crutch. Ever since he plugged you and almost succeeded in bumping you off you've hated him. I don't blame you. I hate him myself, Crutch. Twice he sent me to stir——"

Riordan paused, and his fists hardened. He continued:

"Now listen, Crutch. I want you to do me a favor. I intend to get even with that tinkering flatfoot, and you got to help me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Never mind. You'll know in time. If I told you, and if anything went wrong, you'd make a witness against me." Riordan took out a folded piece of paper from his pocket. "Now listen. This is Steve Blue's night on the street. It'll be easy to run across him. At about nine o'clock I want you to see that he gets this note. Don't let him see you, but be sure that he gets it. You know how to go about it; you've done this before."

"That all?"

"Yes."

He handed the note to the cripple. Crutch Attmon took it, and without a word placed it in his pocket. He nodded firmly, then hobbled away.

Waves of joy surged from fibre to fibre of Crutch's being. His mind was inflamed with the knowledge that, after six long, dreary years of waiting, he was on the verge of evening up his score with Steve Blue. He did not in the least doubt the credibility of it; Big Pete Riordan was a man who meant what he said. As Crutch limped along a sharp desire suddenly came to him. What did the note read? How did Riordan intend to get even with the detective?

In a deserted spot he opened the note. The words had been printed by hand in pencil:

"STEVE BLUE: This is a tip. You can take it or leave it. A pal of mine that's got my goat is breaking into Barg's pawnshop on Broome street. A FRIEND."

For a time Crutch pondered. Then, as he grasped the significance of it, the light of ferocious, eager exultation flickered in his eyes. Riordan intended to kill Steve Blue!

For the first time in years happiness visited the leaden heart of Crutch Attmon. His body suddenly felt ten pounds lighter. Steve Blue was going to die! His—and Riordan's—revenge was about to be consummated.

And the girl! Myra would be forced to remain a patron of Windy Dan's. She would not go away with Steve Blue. Steve Blue would be dead—dead! And he—he, Crutch Attmon—would still be able to see Myra daily, still be able to feast upon the beauty of her hair and eyes, upon the spirited flashiness of her. She would not go away!

For a long while the soul of the cripple floated among the clouds.

At a spotlessly clean table in Denako's Café sat Myra Thompson, waiting for the arrival of Steve Blue. Denako's, scrupulous, of strict standing, was the place at which the detective and his sweetheart had agreed to meet on this night. The time was to have been nine o'clock.

Myra glanced at her wrist watch. She noted that it was already ten minutes past nine, and a slight pucker shadowed her brow. What could be keeping Stephen? She had never known him to be late before; he was always punctiliously on time. In fact, he had always been at their rendezvous before her.

She looked towards the doorway, and her face cleared in a smile. There he was now!

Detective Steve Blue, well knit, tall, clean-cut of feature and clear of eye, moved down the aisle towards her. He ignored the interested glances which several women bestowed his way and dropped into the seat besides Myra. The girl immediately noticed that there was no smile on his face, that he was flushed and eager, as though he had just made an important discovery.

"What's the matter, Stephen?" she asked quickly.

For answer the detective took a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Read that," he directed pithily.

She did so, and a look of displeasure overspread her countenance as she gave it back to him.

"Where—when did you get it?"

"Just as I was hurrying up here. It was wrapped over a stone, which some one threw at me. I don't know who; there was quite a crowd passing."

The girl drew a breath.

"And—you are going?"

"Of course. It's my duty to go, honey." Seeing the look in her face, he took her hand in his. "There's nothing to worry over, Myra. You don't know how sorry I am, having to give up the hour or so I could spend with you, but it can't be helped."

"Stephen, dear, I wish you wouldn't go. I—I'm afraid."

Steve Blue looked at her in momentary surprise. He laughed.

"Why! There's nothing to be afraid of, honey. That's what I'm paid for, you know. I'm duty bound to go; it's not a matter of whether I want to go or not."

"But, Stephen, this may be a trap."

For a moment the detective's eyes clouded. Then he laughed again.

"There's always a possibility of that," he admitted. "But never fear. It's a thousand-to-one shot that you're wrong. After we're married, honey, you'll get over that constant something - dreadful - is - going-to-happen notion. As for your suggestion that it's a trap, forget it. Who would want me out of the way? I'll admit there are a few crooks who hate me, but they'd never turn to—— Say, honey, don't you worry. It'll be over in no time. We police get mysterious notes like these quite often from birds who have it in for old cronies with whom they've had a falling out. We always take advantage of such notes. Maybe there's something you know that makes you think it's a trap?"

Myra, her eyes still troubled, shook her head.

"No, it's only a—a hunch."

"Woman's intuition, eh? Don't worry, girlie."

He gave Myra's hand an extra squeeze, smiled, then went out. On the street he boarded a surface car that would take him two or three squares from Barg's pawnshop, which he knew to be situated on the rim of the city's tenderloin. It was but a ten minutes' ride; at the passage of that time he got off and walked quickly in the direction of the pawnshop. He had decided that he would not go out of his way to get refreshment; if he ran across a patrolman he would take him along, but he would not take the time to call up headquarters and inform them of what he knew. It was not that he wanted sole credit for a capture, were there to be one; Steve Blue was not that sort. He honestly believed that aid was unnecessary, that he could take care of the thief or thieves by himself.

As chance would have it, he did not come across a stray policeman. He gave the matter not a thought, but trod towards his destination resolutely. The district was a narrow, ugly one, and the night was moonlessly dark. His steps grew wary as he approached the pawnshop, a rickety old two-story edifice that seemed as though it would totter over at the least stir of wind.

Flattening himself against a hooded doorway but a quarter of a block from the building, he watched and waited, his right hand very close to his hip pocket. But his keen eyes could determine no movement within the shop. It was shadowed and dark and still; nothing seemed to be out of place. He waited for ten minutes, then crept through an alley towards the narrow lane that bounded the rear. Perhaps, he decided, the thieves had gained entrance through the back.

But everything was quiet there. Disappointment—the disappointment of a red-blooded man who is set on adventure and finds none—came to Steve Blue. Standing on the pavement a few feet from the corner, he crushed the note in his pocket and turned to go.

How near to death Steve Blue was at this precise moment he was to find out with not a little thrill within the next ten minutes. On the opposite corner, screened from view by the turn of the brick wall, crouched a huge form. A gray automatic, the snout of which was covered with a tubular mechanism, rested tightly in the upraised right hand. Steve Blue was blissfully unaware of the proximity of Big Pete Riordan; he did not know that a weapon fitted with a Maxim silencer covered his heart; that a blunt index finger was on the point of pressing against a death-involving trigger.

Suddenly the silence of that quarter was shattered by an ear-splitting explosion. The next infinitesimal second Steve Blue felt something whir harmlessly past his cheek. Flinging himself against the wall, he drew his pistol and swerved. Farther ahead he saw a strangely familiar figure hobble forward—a puny form in the dim blackness of the night. He saw the figure wave something that glittered dully; the next instant there came five more horribly loud shots, fired in split-second intervals.

The echoes reverberated angrily, drowning out hoarse groans and calls and yells. Then momentarily the silence of the graveyard settled over the district. Aware of a horrible din in his ears, Steve Blue, his weapon held in terse readiness, moved cautiously to the corner.

Glancing down the street, he could see people running, and he knew that a crowd would be gathering in less time than a minute. As he turned he was aware of a flash of blue; then the lithe form of a girl moved to him. A pair of bluecoats stood by as he caught Myra Thompson in his arms.

"Stephen!"

"Yes, honey."

The girl was sobbing.

"You—you're not hurt?"

"Why, no."

"Thank God for that!" She drew a fervent breath. "Stephen, I couldn't get the notion that you were in danger out of my mind, so I got these officers and came after you."

They moved across the street to the opposite corner. On the pavement, arms twisted beneath him, lay a huge figure. The head, hanging over the curb, was slewed to one side; the eyes had lost the blue that had characterized them in life, and the fiery green that stared forth in its stead was horrible. A gray automatic lay in the gutter. Blood flowed fom three or four wounds.

Myra Thompson shuddered.

"Riordan!" she whispered huskily.

Steve Blue nodded, smiling grimly.

"Riordan it is!" he acceded. "He almost succeeded in doing for me, too, if that fellow up there hadn't got him first. Wonder who my benefactor is?"

He found out, with not a little surprise, as he and Myra and the policemen walked briskly up the street to where a crowd had gathered. Worming their way through the neck-straining throng, they came upon him, fallen and blood-stained, his crutch shattered at his side. The smile of Crutch Attmon as he looked up at them was feeble and lingering—that of a dying man.

"Are you—all right, Blue?"

The detective nodded huskily. He tried to speak, but words of compassion for the man who had saved his life would not come. He turned his head away.

The cripple looked up at Myra.

"Myra, I did this for you—only for you. Riordan—I did not hate him. He is dead, isn't he? And as for Steve Blue—I——"

He paused. The words were hard in coming. Finally he continued:

"That note—you know of it—don't you? Riordan gave it to me—to deliver it—to Blue. I read it. For a time—I was glad. I realized what Riordan—intended doing. But after I—after Steve Blue got it—I was sorry for what I had—done. The realization that if—Riordan killed Blue—*you* would not be happy came to me. I hadn't thought of it—that way before."

Again he stopped. Then:

"Myra, I did this—for you. I saved Blue's life—so that—you would be—happy. Myra—I love you. I have found out—that—love—is greater—than hate."

His breathing grew laborious. The words came in short, quick gasps. He tried to smile, but a twinge shot through his shoulder and pain contorted his features. After a while he grew calm—the calmness always evident whenever the Angel of Death hovers. His eyes glittered strangely.

"If only he had gotten Riordan on that first shot," Steve Blue muttered to himself.

The cripple's lips opened:

"Myra—remember—I did this—for you. Myra—please—please kiss me."

The girl smiled through her wet eyes. She hesitated, looked to Steve Blue appealingly. He understood and nodded acquiescence. She stooped and brushed the dying man's lips with hers.

A look of satisfaction settled over Crutch Attmon's face. He drew a long, quivering breath. From afar off the clanging of an ambulance came to his ears. He smiled.

Then, slowly, his eyes closed.

Crutch Attmon, for years the target of slander and abuse, the laughing-stock, the humble worm that was daily stepped upon by Windy Dan's friends—Crutch Attmon was dead.

The girl turned from the smiling form that lay there ever so quietly on the hard ground. She placed her head upon Steve Blue's shoulder. Presently she looked up. Then she brushed a stray tear from her cheek.

"Please—take me away. He was—every bit of a man, wasn't he, dear?"

Steve Blue merely nodded. There was a lump in his throat, and he could say nothing.

LEGLESS "BEGGAR" OWNS LUXURY CAR

A LEGLESS man, arrested as a beggar the other afternoon, took his captor to an automobile, which the detective described as a "rolling palace." The detective claims the man has a $20,000 ranch in South Dakota, and lives in the car, which is fitted out as an apartment.

Fred Hammill of South Dakota and more recently of Massachusetts, from which State he came to New York, is the prisoner. Detective Snydecker of the Mendicancy Squad made the arrest recently at 30th street and Sixth avenue.

In night court Magistrate Renaud set the trial over until the following day in Jefferson Market Court. Hammill was released in $500 bail.

Detective Snydecker testified he saw Hammill get out of an automobile at 25th street and Sixth avenue and shuffle painfully up the avenue, looking up into the faces of pedestrians, who showered money into his hands. At 30th street he stopped him, he said, and found more than $9 in his pockets, most of it contributed by the persons Hammill had passed.

He put Hammill under arrest, and Hammill began an appeal to the crowd that always surrounds the unusual. He was being arrested for no reason at all, he insisted, and wanted the crowd to aid him. He was a merchant who sold pencils, and not a beggar, he further claimed.

When he saw Snydecker was firm he changed his tone and told him he had an automobile at 26th street, which he wanted to see safely stowed away before he was taken to the station house. A taxi took him and the officer to the parked car.

It was a marvel, Snydecker says. A 1922 model sedan done in black and white, with a kitchenette, gas lights, a bed and silk curtains. The brakes were specially designed for cripples, and the whole thing had cost Hammill about $3,000, the detective says.

The automobile was left in a garage near the West 30th Street Station House and Hammill taken to the station. There the money was found, and two bankbooks were discovered sewed into his coat lining. These were not taken out.

Pinkerton's Troops

LABOR troubles in different parts of the country during ten or a dozen years past have been instrumental in bringing about public demonstration of an interesting fact, viz., that there is in America a private business concern capable of suddenly bringing into action anywhere in the land, at the bidding of individuals or corporations rich enough to pay for their services, large bodies of men armed, equipped, and drilled for effective military service.

Thus far nothing has occurred that has seemed to require the development of such a force in greater numbers, at any one point, than 500 men, but the system by which they are put into the field is perfected to such an extent that there is hardly a question of the ability to muster 5,000 with almost equal promptitude. The concern controlling this military strength is Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, with branches in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, St. Paul, and Denver. While there is a nominal dividing line between the detective service and the field of duty of the "preventing patrol," or military branch, in point of fact they work together, and are so far interchangeable that the latter is officered from the former, when called into requisition, and that men demonstrating peculiar talent therefor may be promoted from the patrol, which is an emergency employment, to the permanency of the regular detective force. As to the system of organization and direction of the Pinkerton army, Mr. H. G. Julian, who was one of Pinkerton's principal aids in this city, said:

"Telling you how we can here bring into almost immediate service a body of say 150 men, or more if required, will give you a sufficient comprehensive idea of our arrangements in the five other cities in which our branches are now established, the system in all being about the same. In the first place, we have as our regular detective force a body of thoroughly trained men, many of them brought up from youth in this employment, men whom we know to be cool, resolute, courageous, faithful, and resourceful. From these, when the occasion arises, we officer our companies of men enlisted for special duty. But we have also employed by us pretty much all the time, at least during the spring, summer, and autumn, men who consequently are well trained and known to us as in every way perfectly trustworthy. For instance, we supply by contract every summer from twenty-five to thirty men for the protection of the public and the preservation of order at the different popular beaches; for the spring, summer, and fall racing seasons we supply sixty or seventy men to the various race-tracks in the States, and then we have smaller detachments on special service, such as the guarding of stores of heavy importers of silks when they have unusually large stocks of valuable goods on hand. Our men can also be utilized to guard seized illicit liquor.

Taken all in all, there are probably 200 men thus employed by us—in work apart from the detective service—pretty much all the year, and of these we can command the services of at least 150 at a very few hours' notice, even out of their ordinary seasons of employment, since we keep all their addresses and they understand that they are liable to be called upon for duty at any moment. Those men will serve as the nucleus of as large a force as may be demanded. Then we have on record a list of several hundred picked men from among the thousands who have applied to us for employment all of whom have come to us well recommended, and whose character, record, and associations we have had thoroughly in-

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vestigated by our own detectives. They also are supposed to be ready to serve upon call at any moment, and, in point of fact, at least three or four hundred of them would respond immediately. In summer we, of course, could not spare so many of our regular men for an extraordinary service, but we would still have enough to serve as a nucleus, especially since we are so careful in our selection of the listed volunteers, among whom we always, by the way, give the preference to men who have honorable discharges from the army, equal qualification otherwise being understood.

"I cannot say how many men we could furnish upon occasion, since the limit of our capacity has never been tested. When the strike out at Chicago threatened the property of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company some time ago we were called upon to furnish 150 men in addition to those we had already sent out on account of the C., B. & Q. strike. In just two days we had organized, armed, and equipped the required complement and sent them away. Could we have sent more? Oh, yes, but these were enough, all that were wanted. One-half of those we sent were our own regulars, thoroughly familiar with their duties under our system and capable of quickly instructing and guiding the others.

"The largest number the Pinkerton agencies have ever had to furnish for emergency service at any one point was 500. That was on the occasion of the stock yards strike in Chicago from January until March; we had to keep 300 men on duty at the coal yards of Hoboken and Bergen Point. It costs something to employ a large force of Pinkerton men, the charge for them being $5 a day each in addition to food and quarters. The pay of a regular detective is much larger.

"The armament of our men consists of Winchester repeating rifles and navy revolvers, and we employ no men who are not skilled in the use of these weapons. A very large supply of rifles, enough for three or four hundred men anyway, is kept in the Chicago headquarters, and at least that many men could be mustered there in a few hours at any time. The advantage is possessed there of a nucleus of 150 trained men who are constantly employed as watchmen guarding private property. When we put any considerable force in the field it is divided up into companies of from thirty to thirty-six men each, and we have a captain, adjutant, lieutenant, and sergeants, in pretty close imitation of military system."

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
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69 "The Spirit Bell," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
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99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
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115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
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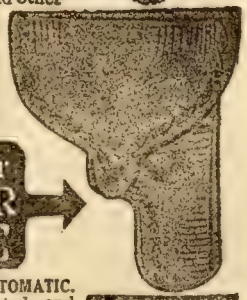

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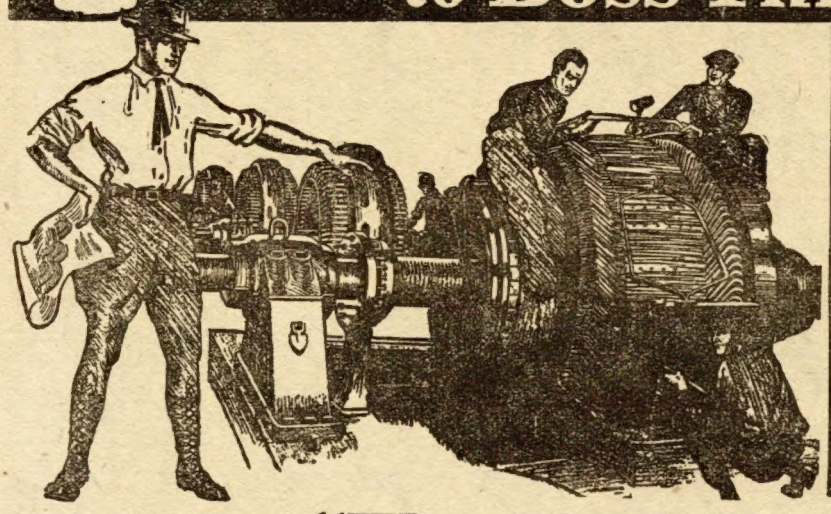

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